00060373

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

THE ALPS OF ARABIA

TRAVELS IN EGYPT, SINAI, ARABIA

AND THE HOLY LAND

BY

WILLIAM CHARLES MAUGHAN

60373

HENRY S. KING & Co.

65 CORNHILL & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

1873

60373

00060373

PREFACE

THE FOLLOWING VOLUME of travel treats of a land which has been described by some of the most distinguished authors of the present day, as well as by many an accomplished and enthusiastic explorer who has now reached that world 'from whose bourn no traveller returns.'

In thus venturing to come after those whose works are read wherever literature has found a home, I may be permitted briefly to mention how I chanced to form one of that ever-increasing band who have been attracted to the glowing East, with its days of dazzling sunshine and nights of dreamy repose. As I was early brought up to a most prosaic and matter-of-fact profession, which fully occupied my time, I had no opportunity of indulging a long cherished wish to visit the enchanted regions of the 'Arabian Nights,' until two years ago. An illness having caused a break in the continuity of my business career,

I thought that a tour in the East would be a pleasant and profitable mode of passing a portion of my time.

Accordingly I started on these travels, and can cordially recommend my readers to follow my example. In addition to the usual Nile trip, I would strongly advise a tour to Mount Sinai to be made, when the travellers can survey the profoundly interesting scenery which characterises the route of the Israelites after they left the land of bondage. If possible, and provided that they care to encounter the trouble, risk, and expense involved, the journey to Petra should be attempted. I assume, in this case, that the travellers have a certain amount of tact and coolness, most useful qualities if the lawless denizens of the capital of Edom are inclined to molest them. They must, however, be prepared for tedious delays and other unpleasant contingencies; and if they go to Petra, the Eastern route, by the Wady el-Ithm, ought certainly to be selected. One of the party should know something of geology, so that the remarkable and unique features of the rocks and mountains may be duly appreciated.

The ensuing pages are based upon a careful record of each day's journey, that was kept by me in the form of a diary. Working upon these materials, which, however imperfect, were at all events written at the *time* and on

the *spot*, it has been my aim to present an accurate and trustworthy narrative of Travel. The Bible Student may perchance distinguish a very few fitful gleams cast upon the boundless ocean of Truth contained in the inspired volume of Scripture. Those mighty depths assuredly will never be fathomed by mortal plummet; but oh! that the blessed time may soon come, when incense and a pure worship shall be offered unto the Lord from the rising to the setting sun, and the knowledge of God shall overspread the earth even as the waters cover the sea.

W. C. MAUGHAN.

KILARDEN ROSENEATH:
October 8, 1873.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

FROM ITALY TO EGYPT.

PAGE

Brindisi to Alexandria—Journey to Cairo—Climate of Egypt—Expenses of Nile Trip by Dahabeah and Steamer—Particulars of Dahabeahs—Time to make the Voyage—Different Routes from Egypt to Holy Land—Expense of complete Tour in the East—Cost of Living per Day—Shepheard's Hotel—Scene in Front of Hotel—Donkeys and their Attendants—Street Scenes, Cairo—Population of Cairo—View from Citadel—The Sights of Cairo—The Pyramids—Pyramids of Sakkara and Serapeum—Memphis—Heliopolis and Obelisk—The Virgin's Well and Sycamore Tree—Museum at Boulac—Palaces of the Viceroy—Shoubra Palace and Gardens—Oriental Luxury and Magnificence—Gezeereh Palace and Grounds—The Khedive—His Mode of Government—His Extravagance—The Opera—The Horse Races, their Absurdity and pernicious Effect—Life in Cairo—Promenades and Amusements—The Viceroy's Political System 1

CHAPTER II.

THE NILE TO ASSOUAN.

The Nile—Its rare Charms and Scenery—Our Passengers and Steamer—Scene at Starting—Requisites for a Voyage on the Nile—Pictures from Deck of Steamer—The Nile by Moonlight—Our Mode of Life—Benisooef, its Trade—Boats on River—Minieh and its Sugar Factory—Meeting the Viceroy—Tombs of Beni Hassan—Their great Age—Sioot and its Sights—Fine View from the Cliffs—Egyptian Pottery—School for Young Gentlemen—Birds seen on Banks—Machines for Irrigation, Shadoof, Sakia—Meeting with down Steamer—Lovely After-glow—Running on Sand-banks—Keneh and the Dancing Girls—Temple of Dendera—Grandeur of Remains—Portrait of

PAGE

Cleopatra—Thebes and its Colossal Ruins—Luxor, its Obelisks—Karnak—The Great Hall—Vast Ruins—Scene by Moonlight—Luncheon in the Ruins—The 'Dinner Bell'—Meeting with Friends—Mustapha Aga—Temples on opposite Side of River—Medinet Habou—The Memnonium—Gigantic Statue of Rameses—Dean Stanley's Remarks on it—Meeting with Grand-Duke of Mecklenburgh—The Colossi of the Plain—Vocal Memnon—Tombs of the Kings, marvellous Interiors—Curious Drawings—View of the Plain of Thebes 25

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST CATARACT TO CAIRO.

Assouan—Scene on Landing—Dancing Girls—The Cataract—Ride to Philæ—Beautiful Ruins—View from Temple—Island of Elephantine—Homeward Voyage—Quarries of Silsillis—Mr. Gaze's Tourist Party—Deserted Look of Quarries—Esneh—Splendid Columns—Sights in the Town—Coaling Steamer—The 'Southern Cross' Constellation—Edfou—Grandeur of its Temple—Description of Interior—The Viceroy again—Road-making—Ruins of Abydus—Ancient Hieroglyphics—The famous Stone Tablet—Passing Memphis—Agreeable Excursion to examine the Ruins—Return to Boulac—Reflections on past Grandeur of Egypt—The Exodus of the Israelites . 57

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRACK OF THE ISRAELITES TO SINAI.

Preparations for the Journey—Selecting a Dragoman—Their Terms—Our Dragoman—Achmet el-Fichawi—Provisions and Stores to take—Clothing and Books requisite—My Travelling Companions—Start from Cairo for Ismailia—The Grand-Duke again—Sights of Ismailia—Lake Timsah—Suez Canal—Its Dimensions—State of the Banks—Sail up the Canal—Kantara—Arrival at Suez—Scenes in the Streets—Arab Festival—The Red Sea—View at Sunset—Entrance of Canal—Start for Sinai—Commencement of Desert—Stillness and Desolation—Ayûn Musa Wells—Tent Life—Our *Table-d'hôte*—The Desert by Moonlight—Early Start in the Morning—Wady Sûdr—A Shower of Rain—Fountain of Marah—Charms of Desert Life—Wady Ghûrundel, 'Elim' of the Bible—Russian Pilgrims—Wady Taiyibeh—Precipitous Rocks—The Sea again—Plain of Murkhâh—Entrance of Wady Shellal—Strange Scenery—Sunday in Desert—Remarkable Gorge—Nukb Bûderah—Jebal Gineh—French Turquoise Hunters—Wady Mokatteb—Its Sinaitic Inscriptions—Wady Feiran—Profound Desolation of the Wadys—

PAGE

Exception in case of Wady Feiran—Its Palm Trees—Ascent of Mount Serbal—Great Heat—Toilsome Nature of the Ascent—Extraordinary Grandeur of View from Summit—Impressions it produced on us—Former Ascents by Travellers—The Descent—Losing our Way—Wady esh-Sheikh—The 'Pass of the Winds'—First View of Mount Sinai—Plain of Râhah—Entrance to Convent 73

CHAPTER V.

THE SACRED MOUNTAIN AND ITS CONVENT.

Description of Convent—Occupations of Monks—Chapels—Chapel of the Transfiguration—Its Interior—Old Mosaics—Relics of St. Catherine of Alexandria—Splendid Silver Sarcophagi—Chapel of Burning Bush—Library—Charnel House—The Garden, its Beauty—Discipline of Monks—Pilgrims and Travellers to the Convent—Ascent of Mount Sinai—Its Height—Fine View from Summit—The Sufsâfeh and Horeb—Reflections on the Solemn Associations of the Spot—Mount St. Catherine—Impressive View of Sinai by Moonlight—Identification of Sinai with the Sacred Mountain as described in the Exodus—Burckhardt—His Account of the Convent and Monks—Their Relations with the Bedawin—Description of Peninsula of Sinai—The Tribes—The Tawarah and Branch Tribes—Costume, Numbers and Character—Porter's Description of Marriage Customs—A truant Bride and pursuing Bridegroom—Our Experience of the Tawarah . . . 103

CHAPTER VI.

SINAI TO AKABAH.

Dragoman proposes to go to Petra—Our Difficulties on the Subject—Necessity for having Gold—A Banking Operation with the Monks—Good-bye to the Monks—The Campanile and peculiar Gong—Departure for Akabah—Wady esh-Sheikh—Tomb of Sheikh—Slow Progress of Arabs—Wady Sal—Fine Mountain View—Kibroth Hattaavah of the Israelites—Strange Character of Rocks—The 'Pilgrims' Mount'—Grand Scenery of Wady Ghuzâleh—Variety of Rocks—Hazeroth one of the Stations of the Israelites—Impression made by the Great Rocks—Wady el-Ain—Beautiful Crystal Spring—Magnificent Gorges—Death-like Stillness prevailing—Sight of the Gulf of Akabah—Description of Close of Day's Journey—The Camels, their strange Ways—Different Breeds—Cost of a Camel—Powers of Endurance—Reach the Gulf of Akabah—its Solitary Aspect—Beauty of its Shores—Rare Shells and Corals—Mode of Fishing with Net—Wonders of the Shore, and the Marine Architecture—Camping Ground by the Sea—Lovely Colouring

PAGE

on the Water—Meeting with our Messenger—Letter from Sheikh Mohammed—Evening Scene—Our Tawarah Attendants—Bathing in the Gulf—Sharks—Steep Pass—Island of Kureiyeh—Laborde's Visit to it—Wellsted's Visit—His Description of Island and Ruins—Their Inaccessibility—Wady Tabah—Head of the Gulf and Glimpse of Akabah . . . 126

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHILDREN OF THE DESERT.

The Gulf of Akabah—Its History and Shores—The ancient Ezion-Geber—Nations who occupied it—Appearance of Town and Castle—Locusts—Description of Castle—The Mecca Caravan—Its Surroundings and the Pilgrims—Burckhardt's Account of Caravan—Our Arrival and Visitors—Preliminary Negotiations—Great Heat—Visit to the Governor—Arrival of the Sheikh and his Brothers—Our Conference as to Petra—Picturesqueness of the Scene—Cost of the Expedition—Heavy *Backsheesh*—Our Tawarah Escort leave us—The Bedawin—Their Characteristics—The Aenezes—Mode of Marching—Tents—Dress—Arms—Food—Mode of Receiving Guests—Industries—Religion of the Tribes—Marriage Customs—Divorces—Women—Their Hard Lot—Hospitality of the Bedawin—Principles of Government—The Sheikh—Arab Justice—Laws of Inheritance—Blood Revenge 158

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EASTERN ROUTE TO PETRA BY WADY EL-ITHM.

Intense Heat at Akabah—Male and Female Palm-trees—Our Departure for Petra—Route of the Israelites—Wady Arabah—Entrance to Wady el-Ithm—Jebel Badry—Barren Character of Scenery—Ruined Fort—Curious Rocks—Fine Mountains in Distance—Wady Hesmeh—Watershed—El-Guerrah—Departure of Sheikh Mohammed—The Alawin—Sunday in the Plain—Singular Remains of Temple—Sand Storm—Curious Chamber hewn in the Rock—Sinaitic Inscriptions—Great Ruins of Humeiyŭmeh—Description and Dimensions of some of Remains—Remarkable Fall in the Land and Gorges beyond—Storm of Wind and Rain—Old Well—Fine Turf—Mount Seir—Extraordinary Rocks and Clefts—Mount Hor—Reservoir for Water—Cold Temperature—Wonderful Colouring of Rocks near Petra—Wady Mûsa—Eljy—Description of Arabia Petræa—History of Idumea—The Horites—The Maccabees—The Nabatheans—The Romans—The Trade with India—The Crusaders—Re-discovery of Petra by Burckhardt—The Risks he ran—Other Travellers—Connection between Petra and Kadesh . 187

CHAPTER IX.

PETRA.

PAGE

Entrance to Wady Mûsa—Tombs—The Sîk Valley—Remains of Tombs—Extraordinary Character of the Defile—Wonderful Colouring of Rocks—Aqueduct for supplying Petra—First View of the Khuzneh—Its Exquisite Beauty—Description of the Monument—Sculptures and Friezes—The Theatre—Fine View from it—Meditation on Strangeness of the Scene—The Main Range of Tombs—Style of Decorations—Tints of the Rock—The Corinthian Tomb—Tomb with Three Tiers of Columns—Great Variety of and Extent of Tombs—Ruins of the City—Banks of the Stream—Pharaoh's Palace—Annoyance we suffered from Fellaheen—Danger of taking Relics from them—Return to our Camp—Crowds of Arabs—Their Angry Bearing—The Khuzneh again—Tumult among the Fellaheen—Anxious Night spent by us—Morning in Petra—Affairs smoothed over—Our March resumed—The Acropolis and Tombs—Arrival of Principal Sheikh of Petra—We again Encamp for Night—El-Deir—Description of it—Extensive View—Object of the Structure—Our Guides disappear—Ibex Hunting—Return to Camp—The superior Appearance of our New Visitors—The Prince of Wales—Mount Hor—Aaron's Tomb—Reflections upon the Tombs and Ruins of Petra—Its Desolation and Ruin 208

CHAPTER X.

PETRA TO HEBRON.

Final Departure from Petra—Sheikh not pleased—Very steep Descent to Wady Arabah—Doubtful Land—Decide to push on during Night—Stillness of our March—Ain el-Weibeh—Its Identity with Kadesh—Importance of Kadesh as a Station of the Israelites—Uninteresting Scenery—The Sufâh Pass—Its Breakneck and Fatiguing Character—View from Summit of Pass—Approach to Holy Land—Reflections on Desert Tour—Meeting with Arabs—Another Moonlight March—Extreme Caution of our Movements—Enter Judæa—Entire Change in Character of Scenery—Beautiful Wild Flowers—Approach to Hebron—Lose our Way—Arrival at the Town—Valley of Eschol—Ancient Date of Town—Its History—Large Reservoirs—Jewish Lodging-house—Indifferent *Cuisine*—Cave of Macphelah—Glass Works—Departure of Alawin Escort—Start for Jerusalem—Abraham's Oak—Hill Country of Judæa—Pools of Solomon—Their great Size and massive Construction—Sight of Bethlehem—Rachel's Tomb—Convent of Mar Elias—First View of the Holy City—Emotions it caused us—Historical Retrospect 240

CHAPTER XI.

JERUSALEM.

PAGE

Entrance to City—Look for Apartments—The Bishop of Jerusalem—Anglican Church and Worship—Other Services—Charitable Institutions—Population of Jerusalem—The Jews—Their Sects—The Christians—Greeks—Armenians—Latins—and other Sects—Tour of the City—Jaffa Gate—Christian Quarter—Damascus Gate—Mohammedan Quarter—Valley of Jehoshaphat—Pool of Bethesda—St. Stephen's Gate—Massive Walls—The Haram—Site of Solomon's Temple—The Golden Gate—Brook Kedron—Large Stones—Tombs in Valley of Jehoshaphat—Tyropœon Valley—Mount Zion—Lepers—Armenian Convent—Interior of Church—Pilgrims' Service—English Church—Via Dolorosa—Jews' Place of Wailing—Pool of Siloam—Tomb of Absalom—Garden of Gethsemane—Mount Moriah—Mosque of Omar—Description of Interior—Threshing-floor of Araunah—Mosque El-Aksa—Ride to Bethlehem—Church of the Nativity—Interior—The Manger—Church of the Holy Sepulchre—Its History—Sights outside the Church—The Rotunda and Dome—The Sepulchre—Mount Calvary—Protestant Burying-ground—Tombs of the Kings—Mount of Olives—Chapel of the Princess De la Tour d'Auvergne—Tombs of the Prophets—Excursion to Jericho and Dead Sea—An Addition to our Party—Fine View of the Plains of Jordan—Large Number of Tents—The Plains of Jordan—The River—The Dead Sea—A Salt-water Bath—Great Influx of Water to the Lake—Ascend the Mountains—The Grave of Moses—Bethany 260

CHAPTER XII.

JERUSALEM TO DAMASCUS.

Start from Jerusalem—Neby Samwil—Bethel—Hill Country of Benjamin—Ain Yebrûd—The Robbers' Fountain—Sinjil—Shiloh—The Tabernacle set up here—Ancient Remains—Road to Nablous—Hawara—Plain of Shechem—View of Hermon—Ascent of Mount Gerizim—Site of Samaritan Temple—Samaritan Feast of the Passover—Origin of the Samaritans—Shechem—The Modern Nablous—Very Ancient Copy of the Pentateuch—Creed of the Samaritans—Jacob's Well—Deep Interest of this Spot—Enter the Town—Our Camping Place—Beautiful Gardens and Trees—Fine Situation of Nablous—Samaritan Synagogue—Visit from a Syrian Missionary—Account of his Work—Samaria—Its Situation and History—Sieges and Miraculous Events which took place—Church of St. John the Baptist—Remains of Herod's Temple—View from Samaria—Plain of Sharon—The 'Drowning Meadow'—A Troublesome Chieftain—First View of Esdraelon—Jenin—The Great Plain of Esdraelon—Description and History—Scene of some of

PAGE
Israel's Momentous Conflicts—Grand Associations—Jezreel—Mount Carmel —Gilboa—Scene of the Death of Saul—Village of Shunem—Nain—Meeting with Americans—Mount Tabor—Steep Ascent—Ruins on Summit—Noble View from Top of Mountain—Approach to Nazareth—Arrive at Town —New Protestant Church—Rev. Mr. Zeller—Sunday at Nazareth—Mount of Precipitation—Church of the Annunciation—Fountain of the Virgin—Pretty Jewish Maidens—Their Peculiar Costume—Extensive View from Nazareth—Visit from Rev. Mr. Zeller—Misgovernment by the Turks—Taxes and Tribute—Kefr Kenna, reputed Cana of Galilee—Scene of the Miracle —Horns of Hattin—First Sight of Sea of Galilee—Its deserted and lone Aspect—Description of Tiberias—Its History—Hot Springs—Camp near the Lake—Stroll through the Town—Jewesses sewing—Journey along Shores of the Lake—Exquisite Beauty of the Flowers—Magdala—Sites of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin—Khan Minyeh identified with Capernaum—Beautiful Fountain—Khan Jubb Yusuf—Last View of Galilee—Wild Flowers—Storks—The Jordan and Lake Huleh—Ain Mellâhah—Heavy Rain—Hills of Kadesh Naphtali—Buffaloes Ploughing—The Lark—Soldiers' Tents—Cross the Jordan—Tell el-Kady—One Source of the Jordan—Dan—Its History—English Park Scenery—Arrival at Banias—Interesting Ruins of Cæsarea Philippi—Main Source of the Jordan—History of Banias—Castle of Subeibeh—Its Immense Size and Strength—Fine View on the Upper Plains of Jordan and Lake Huleh—Handsome Druse Girls—Ascend Shoulder of Hermon—Er-Ram—View of Part of Plain of Damascus and the Hauran—Beit Jenn—The River Pharpar—Kefr Haûwar —Artuz—Richness of the Gardens and Foliage near Damascus—Entrance to the City 286

CHAPTER XIII.

DAMASCUS TO BAALBEC AND BEYROUT.

Matchless Situation of the City—Its History and Antiquity—The Capital of the Mohammedan Empire—Turks conquer it—Massacre of 1860—Dreadful Scenes—Christian Missions—English Church Service—Population of City—The Pasha—Trade—Buildings—Travelling by Diligence—Dimitri's Hotel—The Bazaars—Their Variety—Scenes of Oriental Life—Shawl and Silk Merchants—Silversmiths and other Handicraftsmen—The Castle—The Great Plane Tree—Court of the Hotel—Visit to the Great Mosque—Fine Interior—Lovely View from Minaret of Mosque—Description of a Private House—The British Consul—Visit to Jewish Wedding Entertainment—Animated Scene outside—Brilliant Interior of House—Good Music —Dress of Ladies—A *Pas Seul*—Bride's Presents—Sunday in Damascus—Environs of City—Other Sights—Start for Baalbec—The Barada—Bey-

PAGE

rout Road—Ain Fijeh—Noble Fountain—The Ancient Abila—Wady Barada—Meeting with Americans—Surghaya—The Lebanon Ranges—First Sight of Baalbec—Grandeur of the Ruins—History of Baalbec—Interior of the Temples—Their Colossal Size—Temple of the Sun—Dimensions—Huge Columns—The Six Grand Columns of Temple of Baal—Portico of Temple of the Sun—The Effects of an Earthquake—Interior of Temple—Its Dimensions—The Celebrated Three Great Stones—The Ruins by Moonlight—Village of Baalbec—Company in the Ruins—An Austrian Prince and Princess—Meeting with Mr. Sim—Last View of the Ruins—The Quarry—Huge Block still remaining—Plain of Bukâa—Muallakah—Zahleh, Principal Town in the Lebanon—Druses and Maronites—Religion of the Druses—Its Origin—Numbers of Tribe—Maronites—Their History—Their Religion and Doctrines—Convents—Population—Character of the Maronites—Stoorar—Diligence Station—Kubb Elias—Retrospect of Our Tour—View of Hermon—Approach to Beyrout—Extensive View—Beyrout—Population—Commerce—Harbour—Steam-boat Companies—Banks—History of Beyrout—Silk—Mulberry Trees—Rides about the City—Charitable and Religious Institutions—Syrian Protestant College—British Syrian Schools—Schools of the Church of Scotland—Rev. Mr. Robertson—New Oriental Hotel—Friends from Scotland—Excursion to 'Dog River'—Ride along the Shore—The River—Tablets on the Rocks—Assyrian and Egyptian Inscriptions—Rameses the Great—Latin Inscriptions—Visit to Bankers—Bazaars of Beyrout—Iced Drinks—Sunday at Beyrout—Church of American Mission—Embarkation in Austrian Lloyd's Steamer—Turmoil on Board—Take Leave of Our Dragoman—Lovely Evening—Farewell to the East—Conclusion 327

THE ALPS OF ARABIA

CHAPTER I.

FROM ITALY TO EGYPT.

EARLY in the morning of January 2, 1872, I set sail from the dull, sleepy port of Brindisi in an Italian steamer, the 'Principe Tomaso,' for Alexandria, which place we reached on Friday, the 5th, about mid-day, after a most agreeable voyage, though the steamer was much inferior in size to the 'Poonah,' a P. & O. vessel which sailed and arrived much about the same time that we did. She was a comfortable boat, the *cuisine* excellent, and the captain and officers most attentive. The difference in passage-money between the two steamers (3*l.*) may be considered by many an advantage. There were but few passengers: only two young English cavalry officers and myself, a charming American family, and two foreigners. One day the sea was very rough and our steamer rolled unpleasantly, but in the agreeable society of our two fair American friends we made light of the dreaded horrors of sea-sickness.

Alexandria has but few attractions to detain tourists anxious to push on to see the wonders of that mysterious river, the discovery of whose sources has been claimed by one traveller after another, until the illustrious Livingstone would appear to be the true finder. Neither can the hotels be considered as offering many inducements to delay one's progress; Abbat's and the European are about the best, though this is not saying much. Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needle can be done in a couple of hours, and most people care to see little else. I was indebted to the courtesy of the Rev. Dr. Yule, of the Scotch Church, for some valuable hints as to my future progress.

Our train left Alexandria at 2.15 P.M., and about sunset we were half-way from Cairo, stopping at a station called Kafr Zayat, where we got some delicious coffee. It was pleasant to look out of the carriage-windows and see the strange pictures of oriental life now presented to view for the first time. The numerous water-wheels irrigating the land; the long strings of camels and picturesque figures seated on them; the vivid green fields with strange kinds of oxen and birds feeding in them; the distant minarets, and groves of palms against the evening sky; the delicate yellow, crimson, and gold 'afterglow'—all the features of which one had so often read in books of travel.

Cairo was reached at 8 o'clock, and here was the usual scene of confusion and noise at the crowded railway station. However, I handed my luggage-ticket to the porter of Shepheard's Hotel, who soon extracted my portmanteau and bag

from amidst the multitudinous masses of packages lying about. I had the omnibus all to myself, and we dashed along at a slashing pace till the well-known hotel was reached, where I found several friends from Scotland. The polite Mr. Rapp, who acts as secretary to the proprietor, Mr. Zech, soon found me a room looking on to the cool and quiet garden, which forms a charming feature of the hotel.

As Cairo is the head-quarters of tourists who propose going up the Nile, and thence taking their departure for the Desert or the Holy Land, I will here give a few hints which may be serviceable for intending travellers. For an invalid who wishes to enjoy the delightful climate of the Nile and does not intend to pursue his journey into the Holy Land, the month of November is an excellent time to arrive in Egypt. The temperature of Cairo during that month stands from about 60° to 70° Fahrenheit at 9 A.M., and at 2 P.M. stands between 70° and 76°. There is only an occasional shower of rain at Cairo, and up the Nile it is almost unknown. During December and the first half of January the nights and mornings on the Nile are often very cold, but the days are bright and warm. It is therefore well to have some warm clothing, but it is needless encumbering oneself with the host of miscellaneous articles recommended by outfitting establishments.

The old-fashioned mode of Nile travel by the slow and luxurious dahabeah is, of course, most suitable for an invalid, to whom it is of consequence to spend all the winter in the balmy atmosphere of Egypt. From Cairo to the first cataract and

back, in favourable weather, will occupy from sixty to seventy days, and another twenty days may easily be spent above the cataract. From 350*l.* to 400*l.* is a moderate charge for a party of four persons, including everything except wine and other liquors, for the voyage from Cairo to the first cataract and back. This is for a fair-sized and ordinarily-furnished dahabeah, but when a large and handsomely fitted-up boat is hired, the price is much higher. For a medium-sized boat, suitable for four or five persons, from 60*l.* to 80*l.* per month is the usual price; a large one, for seven or eight persons, costs 100*l.* or 110*l.* A very common size of dahabeah contains three single bed-cabins, a saloon for meals, and a stern cabin, which may be used as a sitting or best cabin. Those prices, of course, are exclusive of provisions for the travellers, but cover everything else. In the latest edition of Murray's 'Handbook for Egypt' the following prices are given: 'A good dragoman will probably ask for taking four persons by the trip to the first cataract and back, with an allowance of ten or fifteen days' stoppages, from 400*l.* to 450*l.*; to the second cataract and back, with an allowance of twenty days' stoppages, from 450*l.* to 500*l.*' [1]

[1] Through the courtesy of Mr. David Robertson, of Glasgow, at whose branch establishments in Alexandria and Cairo travellers will find newspapers, periodicals, the most recent volumes of travel, and will receive every attention, I am indebted for the following information:

There are about 150 dahabeahs on the Nile, mostly owned by natives, and built of wood. Some are of iron, and these are owned by Europeans, and frequently preferred to the others.

The trips to the Upper Nile usually begin about the end of October, and continue till the end of January. The trip to the second cataract for four persons,

But as this volume is specially intended for those to whom time is of consequence, and who are anxious to see as much of the East as is practicable in a few months, I will give some details more applicable to such travellers. Suppose the programme to be a voyage up the Nile as far as the first cataract, back to Cairo, thence *viâ* the peninsula of Sinai to the Gulf of Akabah and Petra, and so on to the Holy Land, and home by Constantinople; the time allowed should be about four months and a half. This was the route which I took, and I would strongly recommend it, as the whole scenery of the Sinaitic peninsula is of the grandest nature, while the journey to Petra is full of interest. The time occupied in the Nile portion of the tour will be three weeks, taking the steamers which start every fortnight from Boulac to Assouan and back, commencing in November. The charge for the voyage, including food, service, donkeys, and *backsheesh*, but exclusive of wine, is 44*l.* per head, paid in gold at Shepheard's Hotel, Cairo, to the agent of the steamers. Care should be taken to secure, if possible, a steamer which gives a separate cabin to each person, as the most of them

allowing eighteen days to stop at various places, costs about 210*l.* sterling, and occupies usually sixty-four days. For eight persons the charge is 320*l.*, and for ten persons, 500*l.* sterling. Dahabeahs hired per month, cost 50*l.* sterling for two persons, and for ten persons 160*l.* sterling.

Those prices vary accordingly to furniture and quality of dahabeah, but those quoted are for good dahabeahs. If there be a pianoforte on board, an extra charge is made. At the end of the journey there is, of course, the usual *backsheesh* to the master and crew. The prices named include all charges for the boat except the *backsheesh*. Separate arrangements as to food, liquors, &c., will require to be made if a dragoman is not engaged.

have cabins with double berths, which are not so agreeable. A dragoman accompanies each party, which generally consists of from sixteen to twenty persons, and he arranges the excursions on shore. The living on board is not bad, though it might be improved, consisting of tea or coffee with bread in the morning, a substantial meat lunch about mid-day, dinner at 6 P.M., and tea with biscuits at 9 P.M.

The steamer stops three days at Thebes, a day and a half at Assouan, and six or eight hours at most of the other places of interest on the river. Of course, this is a very hurried way of seeing the Nile, but it has immense advantages over the tedious delays to which the dahabeahs are exposed, although they give much more time to examine the temples and tombs.

If it is intended to proceed to Sinai after the Nile trip, the atter had better be delayed till January, because the middle of February is sufficiently early for a start on the track of the Israelites from Egypt. There are several modes of proceeding to the Holy Land. First. Starting from Suez to Mount Sinai and returning to the same port, which, including a three days' stoppage at the convent of St. Catherine, would occupy some twenty days; then proceed by steamer through the Suez Canal to Port Said, and thence to Jaffa for Jerusalem. Second. The direct route by steamer from Alexandria to Jaffa, avoiding the Desert altogether. Third. The Desert route from Mount Sinai to Gaza or Hebron *viâ* Nukhl, which involves a tedious journey of fourteen or fifteen days on camels through uninteresting scenery, in addition to the

eight days' march from Suez to Sinai. Fourth. The long Desert route, which I took, embracing Sinai, the Gulf of Akabah, Petra, and thence to Hebron; to do which about forty days should be allowed. This last is the route I should certainly recommend, for although we had some trouble with the *fellaheen* at Petra, still the amount of real danger which a traveller encounters is but small, although he absolutely puts himself at the mercy of the wild and fierce tribes through whose territory he passes. It must be kept in mind that the route to Petra is not always open; in fact, our party was the first that had been there for three years, and it is impossible to learn with certainty at Cairo whether travellers can take this way to the Holy Land. The only plan is to go from Sinai to Akabah, and there see Sheikh Mohammed, with whose escort it is necessary to be accompanied ere you can venture to the rock-hewn capital of Edom. Even although you have to relinquish your journey to Petra, and turn aside to Gaza *viâ* Nukhl, the whole scenery of the Gulf of Akabah is grand and beautiful, well repaying a visit.

Such a tour as I have indicated above, including two or three weeks' stoppage in Italy on the way out, and a fortnight to return home from Constantinople by the 'Blue Danube,' will cost something like 350*l.*, leaving all purchases out of the calculation. Living in the East is expensive; at most of the hotels the charge is 16*s.* per day, exclusive of wine. Washing is 4*s.* per dozen articles, be they stockings, shirts, or pocket-handkerchiefs. Wines are dear—4*s.* a bottle for Marsala, 5*s.* for ordinary claret, 2*s.* for beer or stout. Shepheard's is the

favourite hotel at Cairo; almost all the English congregate there, in spite of the attractions of the 'New Hotel,' which is much patronised by Americans. The Hôtel du Nil is coming into great favour, however; the board is only 12s. a day, but the situation is against it, in a narrow alley off the 'Mooskee,' the chief thoroughfare in Cairo.

The scene in front of Shepheard's Hotel, which is situated in the large open space of ground called the 'Esbekeeyeh,' is well known to all Egyptian travellers, and in itself is a small epitome of the sights, peoples, and costumes which become familiar to those who sojourn in the East. A few steps lead from the street up to a paved landing-place, half verandah half porch. Chairs and tables are placed about, affording pleasant lounges for the motley and cosmopolitan group of travellers from all quarters of the world. Warriors, statesmen, artists, poets, philosophers, invalids, civilians, merchants —every rank in society of all nations, from crowned heads downwards—have wiled away the balmy hours in the grateful shade of that pleasant verandah, watching the constantly shifting picture of oriental life here presented to view. The pavement below is crowded with dragomans, donkey-boys, and the usual hangers-on of an Eastern hotel. The juggler, with his scanty apparatus of cups, balls, pieces of money and guinea-pigs, solicits your attention; vendors of water, otto of roses, finely-wrought table cloths, gaudily-coloured silks, jewelled filagree bracelets, and other articles; beggars, with their picturesque rags—all crowd the pavement until they are rudely dispersed by the heavy hide-whip of a powerful Arab

porter belonging to the hotel. Then the passers-by on the road are innumerable, and wonderfully varied in costume—Arab women dressed in long blue serge robes, with heavy water-jugs on their heads; Bedawin from the Desert, with loose calico shirt, flowing *abba*, and gay silk *kufiyeh* bound round his head by a cord of camel's hair; merchants from the city on their ambling donkeys, with voluminous robes, yellow slippers, and spotless white turban; Turkish women, with white veils that only permit their sad, soft, gazelle-like eyes to be seen, and yellow or purple silk mantles loosely enveloping their forms; long strings of camels attended by their wild drivers, and loaded with every variety of merchandise; occasionally, a handsome carriage and horses, preceded by two fleet running syces, with long black hair, bare legs, shoeless feet, and white robes streaming in the wind, uttering a shrill cry to clear a passage through the crowd—the whole scene forms a strangely interesting series of moving many-hued groups, which delight the beholder's eye.

No sooner does a gentleman make his appearance on the hotel steps, with the view of passing into the street, than a rush takes place among the innumerable attendant donkey-boys. He is assailed with shouts of commendation from each particular boy as he belabours his unfortunate quadruped into prominent notice. 'Want good donkey, sah? Black Diamond very good.' 'Champagne Charley very good.' 'Macaroni, sah? He go like a divvle!' 'Captain Snooks' donkey, sah?' 'Ginger Bob, sah? him very good donkey;' and similar announcements are dinned into his ears, while he is crushed

up in a corner by the individual unwilling donkeys, urged on from behind by their excited and yelling masters. There is, notwithstanding, something exceedingly interesting and taking about many of the juvenile drivers, with their ready smile and intelligent humorous ways; and it is much the best plan to single out one whom you mean regularly to employ, who will come to be looked upon as your property, and his companions cease to solicit your custom.

The sights of Cairo are so familiar to the readers of the numerous volumes of Eastern travels, that a very few words will suffice to indicate the chief of them. The city is said to contain nearly 500,000 inhabitants, amongst whom are 300,000 native Moslems and 25,000 Copts, the remainder being Abyssinians, Turks, Jews, &c., and for the spiritual requirements of this population there are over 400 mosques. The citadel is the place which most travellers will probably visit first, as from it you get a view over the whole city and surrounding country. Standing on the top of the ramparts and looking down, you have before you a confused mass of white buildings, mosques, minarets, streets, squares, bazaars, and gardens, with great vacant sandy spaces here and there, and no hazy pall of smoke hangs over the houses, as in European capitals. Beyond the city comes the broad valley of the Nile, vividly green, interspersed with feathery palm trees, while the smooth shining stream is seen at intervals, winding through the rich alluvial plain. Then succeeds the distant, arid sand Desert, whose verge is sharply defined where it meets the green wave of vegetation; and in a north-easterly direction,

beyond the land of Goshen, may be dimly distinguished the solitary obelisk, more than 4,000 years old, which is almost all that remains of the once great Heliopolis—the famed 'City of the Sun.' At the opposite horizon are seen the matchless forms of the mighty Pyramids, stretching away some twenty miles, till the line ends in the dusky outlines of the Pyramids of Dashoor.

Then the mosque of Mehemet Ali, Joseph's Well, 280 feet deep, the Mamelukes' place of slaughter, and other spots, all in the citadel, will be visited. The mosques of Hassan, Tooloon, and a few more, some Coptish and Armenian churches, the delightful bazaars with their strange crowds and beautiful wares, the fine Tombs of the Caliphs, the Shoubra and Gezeereh palaces and grounds; Boulac, the port of Cairo, and its museum of Egyptian antiquities; the Petrified Forest, old Cairo, and other places, should all be visited. A special excursion will be made to the Pyramids, which are now approached by an excellent coach-road, and for the sum of sixteen shillings a carriage and pair, sufficient to hold four or five persons, may be hired. The road is very well shaded by a fine avenue of acacia trees, extending some miles out of the city. You have to cross the river at Boulac, and then the road commences, which is raised above the level of the surrounding country. The fields on each side are seamed with watercourses or small canals, and in January a thick growth of trefoil, early wheat, vetches, sugar-canes, &c., attest to the fertility of the soil. For almost the whole distance the huge forms of the Pyramids are seen, yellow with the rays

of the morning sun, and, as they are neared, the vagrant Arabs from the village close by begin to run after the carriage. By the time you reach the slope which leads up to the Pyramids, a large crowd will have gathered, but it is best to get the driver or dragoman to make a bargain with the sheikh for the whole party ascending to the top. It costs about five shillings for each person, which includes the services of two or three Arabs to drag and propel you up the enormous stones, a guide to the interior of the Great Pyramid, to the Sphinx, and adjacent ruined temples and tombs, and other places. Of course, at various points, especially in the stifling and slippery interior of the Pyramid, your feelings will be worked upon by the Arabs threateningly imploring *backsheesh*, and most travellers give one or two small silver coins to their guide. The 'Tomb of Dr. Lepsius,' as the Arabs style it, a few hundred yards from the Great Pyramid, should certainly be visited on account of the wonderfully perfect figures and hieroglyphics painted on its interior. This is not nearly so well known as the other highly interesting sights in the vicinity of the Pyramids which have been minutely described by former travellers.

The Pyramids of Sakkara, the Tombs of the Sacred Bulls, and the site of the celebrated city Memphis, should all be visited. This excursion takes an entire day, and, unless you are prepared for a good fourteen miles' walk, it is better to take donkeys in the train with you, to start from the railway station near Memphis for the Pyramids. You must drive or ride to the Gezeereh railway station, leaving the hotel

at 8 o'clock in the morning, and the excursion is rather a fatiguing one. Of Memphis there are hardly any remains, except an ancient statue of the great Rameses lying prostrate in a ditch and nearly covered with mud. Beyond this is a small lake of dirty water, surrounded by sloping ground and mounds of earth, on which grow quantities of palm trees. The whole place, especially towards evening, has a strangely deserted and lone appearance, showing how completely one of the ancient world's great, populous, and powerful cities, with its 'cloud capt towers' and 'gorgeous palaces,' has passed away, not leaving a 'rack behind!' About three or four miles beyond this, after passing through fertile fields of clover, grain, beans and tobacco, and crossing a broad canal on a substantial bridge, the Desert is reached, and the Pyramids of Sakkara rise up to view. They are small, however, compared with those of Geezeh, and much injured; therefore you hurry on to the wonderful Tombs of the Bull. These are contained in a great subterranean gallery hewn out of the solid rock, access to which is gained by a sloping passage cut out of the rock and partially covered with sand. Great dark recesses open out from both sides of the gallery, in each of which reposes a massive sarcophagus, hewn out of one solid block of black Egyptian granite, brightly polished and covered with hieroglyphics. Each sarcophagus is about 13 feet long, 8 broad, and 11 in height, and the ponderous lids of most of them are partially pushed open, so that you can see where the sacred animal once lay embalmed. About twenty-four of the sarcophagi have been discovered, and they

remain astounding monuments of the marvellous mechanical skill of the ancient Egyptians.

An afternoon's ride or drive to the site of Heliopolis is a pleasant excursion. The route goes through fields of grain, and is well shaded by orange groves and acacia trees until, at a short distance from the road, you arrive at the solitary obelisk which once stood before the great Temple of the Sun. It rests in a slight hollow, surrounded by small channels for irrigation, and a little way off are some orange and palm groves. The sculptured figures and birds on the face of the venerable red granite monolith, 67 feet in height, have been greatly filled up by wasps' or bees' nests, which look just like mud plastered over the surface. What a tale this obelisk would tell could it speak of the mighty men from Abraham and Moses downwards who have gazed upon its glossy face. What mighty dynasties has it seen 'come like shadows—so depart;' what myriads of men now mouldering in the silent dust have shaken the ground at its base with their warlike tramp! A little way from this is the celebrated sycamore tree, under whose shade the Virgin Mary is reported to have rested herself. The trunk is very large, and divided apparently into several stems, which unite shortly above the ground, and then the branches spring out, though not to any great extent. A stream of pure water runs near the tree, which was supposed to have been changed by the Virgin from its former bitterness of taste.

The Khedive has now established an excellent museum at Boulac, which travellers will do well to visit. A small door

admits from the crowded dusty street, full of innumerable vendors of Egyptian produce and European manufactures, to a quiet garden, at one end of which the museum is situated. A few statues in rather a mutilated condition will be seen scattered about the garden; they seem to be Grecian in character, but are not remarkable for beauty. But on entering the building devoted to the extensive collection of antiquities which the Viceroy has formed, the visitor will be delighted with the variety and great interest of the articles exhibited. There are specimens of almost all the varied ornaments in sculpture and art manufacture with which the ancient Egyptians adorned their palaces and tombs. The most interesting object to be seen, however, is the celebrated written stone, called 'the Stone of Sân,' from the place where it was found, which was recently discovered. The upper half is covered with hieroglyphics, while there are two translations, one on the lower portion of the stone in Greek, and the other on the side, in demotic characters, the common Egyptian writing. This precious slab is carefully enclosed in a glass case, and excites the special attention of oriental scholars. It records a decree of the priests of Egypt assembled at Canopus, B.C. 254, ordaining the deification of a daughter of Ptolemy Euergetes, and creating a fifth order of priests to be called Euergetæ, for paying divine honours to the king and queen. Besides this, there are many remarkable statues of marble, alabaster, stucco, porphyry, and other materials. One of them is a fine and very old one, supposed to be Chephren, who built the second Pyramid of Geezeh, in a sitting

posture, of polished black marble; another beautiful standing figure in white alabaster, of a female figure, seemingly of regal birth. In one hand she holds a sort of purse, and her exquisitely-rounded arms are profusely decorated with bracelets. Then there are many sculptured stones, fragments of cornices, rare old mummy cases of wood and stone, the former highly decorated with paint and gilding, old Roman and Greek gold and silver ornaments of endless variety and delicate form, innumerable *scarabei*, miniature gods and divinities of the most approved ancient pattern, trinkets and curiosities found in the long-buried temples up the Nile, manuscripts and glass bottles, iron and bronze implements, and many other articles, 'too numerous to mention.'

All who wish to see the luxurious style in which the pleasure-living rulers of this enslaved country live, should visit the Shoubra and Gezeereh palaces and grounds. The former is some four miles out of Cairo, the road to it leading under an avenue of noble acacia trees of great size and age, which form an impervious shade even at mid-day. This road is the favourite promenade of both foreigners and natives of the country, and about four o'clock all the rank, fashion, and beauty (such as it is) of Cairo may be seen enjoying their afternoon drive. In addition to the miserable equipages, drawn by half-starved horses, with which the visitors are fain to put up, there are numerous covered carriages of European make, drawn by very fair horses, containing the veiled and jealously-guarded beauties of the *hareems* that usually form a portion of the establishment of a Cairene aristocrat. With

their inevitable and repulsive-looking sable guardian, seated on the box beside the driver, dressed, as these men now affect, in French costume, with patent leather boots and gaudy gold chains, forming their most conspicuous ornaments, and preceded by a fleet syce on foot, the poor, degraded, yet smiling, painted and powdered inmates of the rich man's *hareem* indulge in their too brief airing, their soft eyes often glancing tenderly and wistfully upon the passers-by, who enjoy the glorious liberty of moving where they choose over desert or plain, while *they* must fret away the weary hours in childish pleasures on downy cushions, their ears soothed with soft music and falling waters, their every sense ministered to, but their persons and wills too often the slaves of some tyrannical and brutal master.

Let us enter the iron portal which leads into this Shoubra palace—this prison, in reality, for some of the veiled beauties whose unhappy, ephemeral life I have indicated above. Here we have a broad and spacious series of gardens, surrounding the palace which a former Viceroy erected to minister to his unholy pleasures. The walks are cunningly constructed, so as to form labyrinthine paths, bordered with many beautiful flowers, various species of geraniums, sweet-scented familiar mignonette, lupins, roses, and sundry exotic plants. Overhanging these pleasant paths are numerous leafy and fragrant trees, whose perfumed boughs cast a grateful shade over the borders. Little rills and fountains of water plash gently on the ear; an occasional song-bird trills his tender lay in the soft atmosphere loaded with the scent of orange blossoms;

glimpses of a purely blue sky, flecked with gauzy white clouds, may be gained through an opening in the trees; and distant vistas of the majestic river, whose turbid waters wash the borders of this beautiful garden, give a calm, placid character to the scene.

You go on until a flight of marble stairs invites to further exploration. Ascending the polished steps, you find yourself in a large open court, so surrounded with corridors and sculptured screens as carefully to exclude any prying eyes from seeing the voluptuous retreat which is here disclosed to our view. Everything you tread on is polished marble, and beyond a tiny balustrade are seen the glancing, rippling waters of a miniature lake, on whose surface floats a painted and gilded boat. Cool divans and downy seats invite the wanderer, languid with the heavy, balmy atmosphere, to recline awhile and listen to the faint music of the wavelets as they kiss the marble lips which would fain woo them to repose. But stay; what luxurious and gaudily-decorated apartment is this, whose open door allures you to enter? Here is magnificence, here is elegance, here is verily a meet haunt for a Sybarite to dream away the listless, fleeting hours.

> 'As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
> The minutes wing their way wi' pleasure.'

Rich and yielding Turkey and Persian carpets receive the noiseless footfall; gorgeous damask couches, of many hues and singular devices, invite you to dreamy repose; superb,

inlaid tables can, at will, be covered with all dainties to please the eye and gratify the palled appetite; musical instruments are here to add to the sensual feast; great mirrors give back the jewelled forms of the houris who alone could be privileged to dwell in such a transplendent retreat.

Ah, what a spot! what a wretched bauble for which to barter away Life's glorious career and the Soul's immortal destiny! Who can wonder at the master of such a palace passing a feeble and unhonoured life in miserable bondage to his passions and senses!

Even more magnificently furnished is the really handsome Gezeereh palace on the river's bank opposite Boulac. An order is required to admit you to these jealously-guarded precincts, for the mysterious regions of the *hareem* are close by, and woe be to the intruder who dares to set foot in them. The palace is exceedingly large, and, when the outer door is passed, you find yourself in an extensive hall paved with diamond-shaped blocks of marble, on either side of which some very handsome saloons open out. First, there is a dining-room, with splendid and artistic decorations, a fine marble mantel-piece, inlaid with enamel and gold, and a great mirror with a marble frame, the floor being covered with rich Persian carpets. Then, ascending a broad marble staircase from the entrance hall, a suite of beautiful drawing-rooms are reached, filled with richly gilt furniture of the most luxurious description, each one of the massive marble mantel-pieces being adorned with a bust of the

present Viceroy, who seems to have a special passion for seeing his by no means remarkable features reproduced in marble. In one of the rooms is a handsome clock, encased in very curiously inlaid enamelled framework. The ball-room is a very large apartment, with a highly-polished variegated wooden floor of mosaic pattern, and decorated with lofty mirrors, immense crystal chandeliers, and other splendours. Beyond this are bed-rooms; one, exquisitely furnished, has been honoured for a night by the august presence of both the Empress of Austria and the ex-Empress of the French. It is, I may mention for the information of the curious in such matters, all hung with rich green satin, and its gorgeous decorations would probably be quite sufficient to deprive of slumber any guest of less exalted rank than these illustrious ladies.

From the palace windows there is a far-reaching view of a long stretch of the Nile, enlivened with numerous sails and strange-looking river craft, laden with their picturesque contents; while at intervals, amidst the graceful palm trees which line the banks, white villas, belonging to the prosperous magnates of this semi-European capital, are discerned, giving life and animation to the scene. On the opposite bank the mouldering houses of Boulac rise up from the water's edge, many of them specially noticeable from the strangely picturesque latticed windows which they possess. Surrounding the palace are tasteful gardens, extremely prettily laid out, irrigated by canals of certainly not over-clean water, overhung with weeping willows, pendant acacias,

drooping tamarisks, and other graceful trees, and crossed at intervals by tiny bridges with neat balustrades, while abundance of orange trees, citrons, magnolias, azaleas, and other flowering shrubs, give variety and verdure to this pleasant spot. Besides which there is a very respectable collection of wild animals at one end of the garden, thus adding a zoological zest for those who have a *penchant* for savage beasts.

The enlightened ruler of this country has conceived the happy idea of attracting Europeans to his capital by introducing two species of amusements which, however much their frequenters may laud them to the skies, have hitherto proved anything but conducive to pureness of morals either amongst actors or spectators. The amusements to which I refer are the opera and horse-races, and as no expense has been spared in getting first-rate singers and undeniably good animals together, the result probably proves gratifying to His Highness the Khedive. For a consideration of something like ten francs, any one, if so disposed, may hear the graceful music of Verdi warbled forth by *artistes* of acknowledged European reputation, the *blasé habitué* of the opera may refresh his memory with renewed illustrations of the passionate woe breathed forth in 'Ah, che la morte,' or the pathetic upbraidings of Signor Graziani in 'Il balen.' The opera of 'Aida'[1] was, in the season of 1872, brought out at Cairo with a splendour which the 'ratepayers' of Egypt, it is to be hoped, duly appreciated. The racecourse is some

[1] An Egyptian opera composed by Verdi for the Khedive.

two or three miles out of town, on the road to Heliopolis. It is merely a rough track on the outskirts of the Desert, with a rude rail to indicate the course, and, on account of the heavy sand in which the horses run, the pace is very poor. Apparently, the 'turf' has few attractions for the Arabs, as the attendance at those races which I witnessed was extremely small, though some fine horses contended for the liberal prizes the Viceroy gave, and most of which were carried off by his own stable. The grand stand is a wooden erection, by no means imposing in appearance, and there were a few miserable booths behind, where bad brandy was being dispensed at great prices to the French and English jockeys. All the features of an English racecourse, except the indescribable air of wickedness and blackguardism which is inseparable from such meetings, were conspicuous by their absence. There was no excitement as the horses neared the winning-post, no cheering when the winner came in, hardly any attempt at keeping order on the course, no shouting out vociferous bets, no brilliantly-dressed galaxy of female loveliness, no thronging mass of dusty humanity streaming homewards when the events of the day were over. The whole affair was not only demoralising but woefully dull, hopelessly out of place, and of little advantage to any one except the donkey boys and hackney coach proprietors, who were enabled to charge double and treble their usual fares.

It is extremely easy to fall into the lazy *dolce far niente* life of many travellers, who come to Cairo to lounge away the

winter months. There is the incessant changes in the inmates of the hotel to give variety of company and faces. There is the eating, drinking, smoking, and reading of newspapers, and the salutations with your friends on the verandah. Then, for members of the fair sex, and not a few of the men also, there is the shopping in the Mooskee and bazaars. Every afternoon also, for more than an hour, one of the Viceroy's bands discourses popular waltzes and galops of the day in the large public gardens, recently constructed before the 'New Hotel,' which are laid out with a very fair eye to the picturesque. Refreshments can be got in these gardens at open-air cafés, and they are becoming a rather favourite promenade for the strangers, while not a few of the denizens of Cairo take advantage of their attractions. New buildings are springing up in all directions, especially in the neighbourhood of the 'New Hotel,' which, by the way, is the property of the Viceroy. His Highness has a passion for building, and between the hotel and Boulac an elaborate series of streets and boulevards are being constructed, which gives a very European aspect to this portion of the city. It needs the presence of palm trees and the dim forms of the majestic Pyramids, duskily looming in the distance, to convince one that he is verily in the land of Egypt, where the gleaming crescent is the ensign of power.

A walk round about the outskirts of the city will well repay the traveller, as he can then see the activity of the Khedive [1]

[1] The Arabic word is *Khidewi*. The two first letters are pronounced like the 'ch' in 'loch.'

in constructing new canals for irrigation and navigation, in extending railway accommodation, and similar projects. He will observe various processes of cultivation and irrigation going on, while great gangs of unfortunate peasants are being driven to their hated work by overseers and task-masters, who do not scruple to use arguments based upon the whip and stick should the poor wretches diminish aught of their exertions. Still, with all his boasted schemes of civilisation, his sugar factories, and canals, and railways, his boulevards, his operas and ballets, his English grooms, carriages and horses, his consulting engineers, and syndicate of bankers to find the ways and means for that lavish expenditure which is everywhere going on,—in spite of this seeming show of outward prosperity, the power of the Viceroy rests, after all, upon a miserably inadequate foundation, for it is assuredly not grounded upon the happiness, affection, and enlightened approbation of a contented and loyal people.

CHAPTER II.

THE NILE TO ASSOUAN.

At last we are on the smooth-flowing yellow waters of that mysterious stream which for so many ages has excited the wonder of the most profound sages, and baffled the perseverance of innumerable daring discoverers. Our own immortal Livingstone, that dauntless old man, buried for years far from the ken of the civilised world, amidst lone deserts, and the dismal solitude of deadly fever swamps, seems at last to be on the eve of solving that great problem which for so long has puzzled the world. What innumerable travellers, with varying shades of descriptive enthusiasm, have painted the charms of old Nile! But those are ever new, ever radiant with the imperishable hues which must still invest the beautiful, the strange, and the majestic in nature.

How often have we read of its manifold charms, its reedy sandy banks, its clustering palm groves, its mud-built Arab villages, its animated pictures of riverside life, the strings of slow-pacing camels and their ragged picturesque attendants, blue-veiled women with graceful water-jar poised on their shoulder, its green thickets of acacias, its solemn temples and mouldering cities, dotting the narrow zone of deep

verdure which extends from the river banks to the distant background of white limestone mountains! Gliding along the turbid stream, the first objects which prominently strike a beholder's eye are the endless beautiful groves of feathery palm trees, and especially lovely they seem against the purple evening sky; while the delicate after-glow gradually overspreads the horizon, as the rich crimson hue of the setting sun softens into a rosy tint, faintly suffused with amber. Then the lovely moonlight nights with their deliciously calm balmy atmosphere, when palm groves, billowy plain and dim mountain ranges alike are blended into one soft, ghostly and harmonious whole, and the shimmering flowing stream, like a pale glassy shroud, silently steals away!

Our steamer sailed from Boulac pretty punctually on the afternoon of Tuesday, January 23, having on board a party of some eighteen persons of varied nationalities, professions, temperaments, and ways of 'taking things.' We had Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, Americans, one especially vivacious Transatlantic family, a Canadian, and two most worthy and exemplary members of the great Teutonic Fatherland, one of whom, a learned professor, and who was held in esteem by all for his good humour, cheerfulness, and *bonhomie*, became quite a leader and an authority amongst us. Besides the worthy professor, we had amongst us a barrister, an embryo clergyman, a cavalry officer (English), an ex-hardware merchant, a sugar refiner, a *quondam* banker and present gentleman at large, with philanthropical but decidedly indefinite ideas, a dry goods merchant, and a mysterious

gentleman addicted to silence, as to whose occupation, past and present or prospective, 'deponent' is unable to say aught. Then we were also accompanied by a dragoman, Denis Skey by name, a young Syrian professor of the healing art, Doctor Louis, who knew no English, but in an undemonstrative way made himself acceptable to us all, two Italian waiters and a third attendant of polyglot nationality, besides the Arab captain, reis, engineers, and other members of the crew. Sundry friends accompanied us to Boulac, and libations of champagne were poured forth towards our successful voyage. At length, amidst the vociferations of a crowd of Arab boatmen, our steamer backed out from the numerous dahabeahs and river boats by which she was surrounded, and fairly breasted the stream.

Behold us now on the deck of our queer old-fashioned looking craft, with her white paddle-boxes and antiquated hull, from the stern of which streamed a rather unwashed looking ensign, emblazoned with a crescent and star, the crest of His Highness the Khedive. We are arrayed in all the varied costumes which it pleases your oriental tourist to affect. Some have straw hats, some pith helmets, some woollen caps; light tweed garments predominate among the gentlemen; and the *chaussure* of the party displays a variety of styles, from the good old-fashioned British black leather boot shaded away in gradations of undressed mixtures to a simple white canvas integument. But stay! surely I had forgotten that we had ladies on board—and very pleasant specimens of 'our American cousins' they were; and two

vivacious juveniles, with the advanced manners of that all-pervading nation, completed the family group. The latter speedily became favourites, and their cheery young voices, and fresh unsophisticated ways, decidedly added to the hilarity of our cabin party.

Before the first dinner-bell had sounded at about half-past five o'clock, we had pretty well shaken into our new mode of life, and established our respective positions on deck. Let me here advise all similar travellers to be sure and provide themselves with cane arm-chairs for lounging in on deck, as the steamer possesses two at most, and there is something peculiarly pleasant in watching the ever-changing riverside panorama from a comfortable arm-chair. They can be got, for some fifteen shillings, in the Mooskee, and may be disposed of without difficulty when the voyage is over. Canvas shoes, which may be bought in Cairo for twelve or fifteen francs, the tourist will find extremely comfortable for deck wear, though they cannot be recommended for walking ashore, or on the gravelly sand of the Nile valley. Ordinary undressed calf leather shoes or boots, with tolerably thick soles, are the best for land work, for it is vain to expect to get boots polished in the East.

Two suits of tweed, one light in colour, neither of heavy texture, and a better suit of clothes for Sundays and visits of ceremony, with a thick warm overcoat, a railway rug, an umbrella, and a stout sunshade (costing some five or six francs), a small bottle of quinine, and two or three 'simples' of the Pharmacopœia which will at once suggest themselves,

a pocket compass, some woollen and coarse cotton shirts, a soft felt hat, a pair of green spectacles, a measuring tape, two or three needles and some thread, and a blue veil, are positively about the whole requisites of an ordinary Egyptian tourist. Some people encumber themselves with English saddles, or purchase in Cairo Egyptian ones, for the donkeys on which you visit the tombs and temples up the Nile; they carry revolvers, elaborate travelling bags, medicine chests and such like, all of which are of little use, but certainly give inestimable trouble. No doubt, for the long Desert journey, other appurtenances are requisite, but these I shall mention in their proper place.

By dinner-time we had passed Rhoda Island, where the infant Moses was supposed to have been found, and where is the Nilometer for measuring the height of the inundation, the long bridge of boats opposite Boulac, and were nearly abreast the site of ancient Memphis and the Pyramids of Sakkara. The banks of the river for some distance above Boulac present a gay and semi-European appearance, from the numerous palaces, villas, and sugar factories embosomed amidst the green acacia, tamarisk, and palm trees, which clothe the landscape. Great numbers of river boats, impelled by huge, wing-like lateen sails, and laden with all manner of up-country produce, interspersed with piles of *gollahs* or porous water-jars, and Ballas jugs or vases, are seen gliding along the stream. Every two or three hundred yards the *shadoof* is being worked by half-naked *fellahs*, raising up the life-giving Nile water to enrich their thirsty

ground. All is new and strange, and even that sound so magical in British ears, the dinner-bell, is temporarily disregarded in the dreamy listlessness of your new life.

When we rose from dinner and regained the deck, what a marvellous change had come over the scene! A pale, wan radiance suffused the landscape, misty grey vapours rolled imperceptibly away from the river's banks, a pearly halo crowned the distant mountain's brow, and the dark purple glittering canopy was spread overhead. Soft and balmy was the air, a profound calm reigned around, occasionally a twinkling yellow light would gleam amid the palm groves. The river itself, no longer seeming a dingy yellow, shone with a ghostly, glassy hue, and the monotonous beating of the paddles alone disturbed the sense of perfect repose.

We usually had our coffee on deck under an awning, serving alike to keep off unhealthy night dews and those unpleasant black specks which the funnel so liberally bestows on all and sundry. Then we discussed the events of the day, and made plans for the morrow; while some of our party perambulated the deck with sentry-like step, others gazed at the stars, smoked and thought of home, the lovely and the loved ones, 'though lost to sight to memory dear;' others (among whom I generally found myself) were busy over journals, diaries, and guide books down in the cabin. Our first anchoring place was at a small village called Kafir-el-Aiat, which we reached about nine o'clock, and, after the steamer was made fast to the bank, some of our party proceeded ashore to investigate what was to be seen in the

misty moonlight. The only result of our promenade in the vicinity of the village was to bring out from their hiding places tribes of Arab dogs, who kept up thereafter an intermittent howling for most of the night. The night air on deck was deliciously soft, and even warm, which made one reluctant to 'turn in.'

Next morning, about half-past eight, we passed the so-called 'false' pyramid, an irregular mass of stones built on a substratum of rock at a considerable distance from the river, and towards one o'clock we reached the town of Beni Sooef. This is a town of some size, and is dignified by having a resident governor, but its streets and bazaars are miserable and dirty. Once it had a considerable linen trade, which has now almost entirely deserted it. It was a walk of perhaps a mile and a half from our place of landing to the town, which is surrounded by many trees, a good number of the gum tribe especially. Sugar canes, grain, clover, and beans, seemed to be the staple articles grown in the fields through which we passed. Our stay ashore did not exceed two hours, and we were glad when steam was got up again.

We were constantly passing dahabeahs either going up or returning down the river, and this caused a brief excitement among our party, some rushing to see what flag the stranger carried, while in many cases we passed sufficiently near to distinguish if there were friends on board. That evening we encountered a down-stream steamer which had been hired by a party of seven Americans, ladies and gentlemen,

who had now been away from Cairo some forty days. We approached close enough to enable our dragoman to hand over a packet of letters which seemed to give great delight to the recipients.

Minieh was our next stopping-place, which we reached soon after mid-day. This is an important and rising town, as well as a very ancient one, though there are no old buildings or remains in it. The railway passes here on its way to Thebes, and there is a very large sugar manufactory which we visited. A new engine and refining-house was in course of erection, and we saw a number of huge copper boilers ready to be placed in position, that must have each cost about two thousand pounds. The factories are almost entirely raised and kept up by forced labour; that is to say, notice is given to the local authorities that a certain supply of workers from so many villages must be got, and the unfortunate *fellahs* are driven away from the tillage of their fields, or whatever else they may chance to be engaged upon, and transported in open boats to the special factory which it pleases the Viceroy to construct or enlarge. Certainly, in some of the factories, they do give good native workers pay at the rate of about a shilling per day, an inferior hand sixpence, and a boy twopence. There is also a sort of tacit understanding that the wretched peasants will not be detained at their enforced work for more than a few months, but this is rarely adhered to. Though the chief of the village from which the labourers are driven is bound to provide their wives and children with food, still this duty he will do his

best to evade, and the whole system is based upon monstrous tyranny and injustice. In spite of all this, and of the fact that sugar is a Government monopoly, I was told by an eminent Scotch authority on these subjects, who had personally examined into the matter, that he questioned if the viceregal speculation was a profitable one.

We stumbled upon the illustrious personage who rules this land at Minieh, where he has a handsome large palace, near the river side, surrounded with trees and pleasant gardens. There were some seven or eight steamers, all flying the crescent and the star, in attendance upon His Highness, and a variety of soldiers, personal attendants, and high officials were sauntering along the banks near the palace. The bazaars presented the usual appearance, full of barbers, smokers, coffee-drinkers, and drug shops, in which were numerous articles of European manufacture for sale, such as pickles, jam, marmalade, beer and stout, Dutch cheeses, and other agreeable condiments. There was, however, little to tempt one to expend any of that loose silver of which (as before) I would recommend travellers to lay in a small store, for purchases up the river.

Shortly after steaming away from the town, we were struck by the singular aspect of a series of very rugged, strangely shaped rocks, which rise up from the river's edge, and we also saw, for the first time, those peculiar rafts of *gollahs*, or water jars, which are tied together in regular rows one above another, and so float down with the stream. There was nothing calling for any specially enthusiastic admiration on the

part of our voyagers, until we visited next morning the celebrated tombs of Beni Hassan. Now, as my object is not to go into elaborate accounts of those sights which have been so well described in countless former books of travels, but rather to indicate what actually is to be seen during a three weeks' hurried tour up the Nile, I will say but little about these tombs.

We left our steamer after an early breakfast, and having made our way through a very poor-looking village, emerged upon a broad gravelly valley which opens out from the hills at this point. Some curiously sculptured chambers on the right-hand side of the rocks which close in upon the valley, were examined, and then we proceeded along the foot of the sloping cliffs facing the river, till the tombs of Beni Hassan were reached. A dreary, desolate track it was along which we walked—dry, arid gravel under foot, overspread at intervals with great boulders of stone from the hills above. We passed near two ruined Arab villages, utterly deserted by their former occupants, who, in fact, were a band of robbers, and having proved too troublesome for the neighbourhood, they were rooted out to a man by orders of Ibrahim Pasha, and their habitations destroyed.

The tombs, which are supposed to have been constructed nearly 3,800 years ago, are cut out of the solid rock, and have a cavernous, melancholy look. After excavating the interior, pillars of rock were left at intervals, to support the roof, and subsequently wrought into artistic capitals in the order of Doric architecture. Some of these grotto tombs are

large, with porticoes in front, and the columns within are so placed as to give a nave and aisles. In one of them, the pillars are in the design of stalks of water plants bound together, with a lotus blossom above; and, in some instances, they form polygons, 16½ feet high and 5 feet in diameter. Many of the frescoes and painted figures are wonderfully vigorous and well designed, especially a series of pictures representing wrestlers and athletes in every variety of gymnastic attitude. Then in one tomb is a singular representation, apparently intended to be a number of Greek prisoners, which some learned travellers have pronounced to depict Joseph and his brethren. The colours and frescoes in some of the tombs are strangely fresh, considering their vast age, and in a few cases mummy pits remain to attest the purpose for which these curious grottoes were designed.

We experienced a veritable Egyptian gale on the river this day, and great clouds of sand were consequently raised ashore which, at times, blew right across from bank to bank. Passed some really fine bluff rocks a little distance above Beni Hassan. They rose perpendicularly from the water, and were pierced with numerous small cavities, that were taken advantage of by quantities of birds something like rock-pigeons. Towards evening the wind died away, and the temperature grew much warmer as we reached the important town of Sioot, where we lay all night. This is the capital of Upper Egypt, contains more than 20,000 inhabitants, and from here the caravan to Darfur starts. The

town is situated at the foot of the Libyan Hills, and, seen from a little distance, has a remarkably picturesque appearance, with its surrounding acacia and palm groves, and several graceful minarets rising amidst the verdure. You walk from the river's brink to the town for nearly a mile along a raised causeway, and then find yourself involved in the usual labyrinth of dirty streets and stifling bazaars. There appeared to be a market going on, and quantities of camels and donkeys, with their owners attired in their varied costumes, were picketed round the outskirts of the town, while crowds of merchants, traffickers in produce, vegetable sellers, water and sweetmeat sellers, pilgrims, soldiers, and a profusion of children, made it a matter of considerable difficulty to force one's way onwards.

Accompanied by a friend, I walked through the town to the cliffs, a little way beyond, where are some grotto tombs of no very special interest, excepting in the case of one where a curious procession of soldiers carrying shields is traced on the rock. But the view from the summit of the hills at the back of Sioot is really well worth going to see. You look down upon the irregularly-shaped town, its mosques, minarets, pigeon-houses, and palm groves, with the green fields extending in rich luxuriance till they are met by the broad glistening river on one side and the white limestone mountains on the other. A noble reach of the Nile valley is spread out beyond this, and the distant desert line may be sharply traced where it meets that waving carpet of bright verdure, while life and animation is given to the picture by the bird-

like wings of the numerous river craft now filled by a favouring breeze.

At Sioot great quantities of different sorts of pottery manufactures are produced, many of the articles being characterised by much taste and elegance of design. The cups and saucers, water-decanters, candlesticks, drinking-vessels, and such like, are really tempting to a lover of fictile ware; but the worst of it is the great difficulty in transmitting them unbroken to England. Through the kindness of a Scotch friend, who was despatching several considerable packages to the Clyde, I was enabled to forward a few of my purchases, and they arrived absolutely intact. Besides the above articles which our steamer party was importuned to select by many itinerant vendors, we were besieged by a perfect regiment of sellers of other Egyptian ornaments: fans, daggers, turquoises, necklaces, silver nose-rings and ear-rings, and similar trinkets, who succeeded in doing a fair amount of business.

I visited, on our downward voyage, a large school, 'located,' to use a favourite Transatlantic phrase, in an ugly but extensive white building of a substantial character close to the river side. The rooms are spacious and lofty; and the desks, forms, great black-board, with mathematical diagrams on it, the school maps, and other educational paraphernalia, gave quite a European aspect to the establishment. The school-books were printed partly in Arabic, partly in French, on the same page; and I observed a history of Egypt in the language of *la belle France*. Upstairs

there were several large dormitories, excellent airy rooms, with good glass windows, and a double row of clean-looking iron bedsteads to accommodate the slumbering forms of the interesting Egyptian youths who, at that particular moment, were enjoying their brief relaxation in the playground. The young gentlemen in question, who doubtless were the sons of prosperous merchants and officials about Cairo, wore a sort of military uniform. Some were dressed in red trousers with a stripe down the side, and a black coat studded over with brass buttons, while the unmentionable habiliments of others were of duck material; but all wore the universal red *tarboosh*, or fez cap.

Leaving Sioot, with its red pottery, dirt, and teeming population, the next place of any size that we passed was the town of Akhmin, once a large and ancient city of Thebes. It is now little better than a village, whose most conspicuous feature is a number of exceedingly neatly constructed pigeon-houses, carefully whitewashed, and apparently tenanted to an alarming extent. The character of the river banks here is very similar to what it has been for the last two days, but this district is specially rich in varieties of birds of all descriptions that cover each rounded mudbank or flat reach of shore. Herons, flamingoes, geese, ibises, pigeons, ducks, and a whole catalogue of the feathered creation, disport themselves to the gratification of the sportsman and ornithologist. Innumerable *shadoofs* were in full work all along this locality; and as no book upon Egypt ever fails to describe this primitive irrigating machine, one can only follow

suit. All that it consists of is a bucket of tough skin hung from a horizontal pole, at the other end of which leverage is gained by a heavy lump of dried mud or stone, which is suspended close to the pole, and the latter is firmly attached at right angles to a stationary crossbar, resting on two upright posts of stout palm wood. Draw down the loaded end of the pole, and up goes the full water-skin, which is then emptied into the irrigating channel. If the bank is steep, three, four, or five sets of *shadoofs* are placed in position, one above another, so as to raise the water to the requisite level. The one at the river's edge lifts the precious fluid up to a short canal conducting to a pool, which feeds the bucket of a machine higher up the bank, and so on till the field above is reached. Another species of irrigating machine is the *sakia*, or large water-wheel worked by an ox, a donkey, or, very rarely, a horse. The animal perambulates in a circular space like that of an old-fashioned threshing mill, and so turns a large revolving wheel hung vertically, to which are attached numerous earthenware pots, tied on to a strong rope, and the latter, again, is so fixed to the wheel as to allow sufficient scope for each jar to fill with water out of the deep well below. The jars, as the wheel revolves, are emptied into a short conduit, communicating with the main channel of irrigation. These *sakias*, which are almost always stationed at some distance from the river, keep up an incessant groaning, creaking, monotonous sound, unlike almost any other machinery music, if one may so style it.

The town of Girgeh and the deeply interesting ruins of Abydus, one of the most famous ancient Egyptian cities, were passed by us on our upward voyage unvisited; and about 3 o'clock P.M., on January 28, we met, on her return to Cairo, the passenger steamer which left Boulac the 9th of this month. She lay off the village of Bellianeh, to enable her passengers to visit the temples situated some five or six miles from the river. I walked from our steamer, which had come to anchor more than a mile higher up the stream, to see a friend whom I expected to fall in with on board the other vessel. It was excessively hot, and you raised sufficient dust in walking along the towing path to add to the discomfort caused by the oppressive atmosphere; consequently, I was rather disgusted to find that I had my walk for nothing. There was a wonderfully beautiful afterglow that evening, and most of our party assembled on deck to see its too-rapidly vanishing glories imperceptibly fading away into the pale, sheeny radiance of the rising moon. It is very difficult to trace the distinction of colouring in those exquisite sky pictures, which seem to attain their acme of beauty about half an hour after sunset. All the horizon nearest the grey mountain outline is suffused with a deep red tinge, and this is delicately graded away through a succession of amber, yellow, violet, blue and pale purple tints into the dark sapphire of the overarching canopy of Heaven.

We lay all night at Farshoot, a place of no particular note, and steamed off at about 7.30 in the morning. The river is confined to a somewhat narrow channel by steep

rocky banks, between this and Keneh, where we again stopped for some hours to visit the noble remains of Dendera. Consequently, the stream is rapid, and we were thankful that we possessed some other motive power with which to contend against its force than the cumbrous sails of the river craft that were diligently wooing each fickle, favouring breeze. Still, in places where the channel widens, and there are sand shoals, all was not 'plain sailing,' and occasionally, with a heavy, plunging shock that decidedly disturbed one's equilibrium and equanimity, our steamer ran aground and stuck fast. Then all was excitement and confusion among the hitherto sleepy, idle crew. The captain emerged from a dingy cabin, redolent of bad tobacco and oil; the semi-nude form of our Arab engineer protruded itself from the dark regions below; the dragoman came forth out of his small cabin on the foredeck to inquire what was the matter; our Italian waiters threw aside the cards with which they frequently solaced their few leisure moments; while the somnolent passengers, most of whom, at some portion of the day, regaled themselves with furtive slumbers in their modest sleeping apartments, one by one appeared above the 'companion' to see what was wrong. The individual who, on these occasions, showed himself to be master of the situation, was the *reis* or steersman. He it was, and not the captain, who took command of the vessel, shouting out his directions, or venting his execrations with true Arab volubility and profuse energy of gesticulation. The orders appropriate to the occasion were given to the engineer in

that peculiar broken English which is the steam-engine language both of Egypt and the Levant, and, with the help of extra pressure on the boiler, and long poles energetically thrust into the sandbank by our united crew, at last the obstacle was overcome.

Keneh, where our steamer brought up, is a town of by no means good reputation, situated some three miles from the river; and here numerous dancing girls congregate, whose performances some of our party were anxious to witness, but subsequently appeared to have got remarkably little value for the napoleon apiece which they had to pay. There is always an amount of mysterious reticence, as far as I have noticed, observed by those who have seen the *ghewazee* perform, but, from what I could learn, the exhibition was neither amusing, interesting, or specially indecent. It was held in some disreputable café or smoking divan, and, between the vile odours of the place, the oleaginous pall of thick smoke enveloping the scene, the horrible compounds which both women and spectators (among whom the native element predominated), consumed, and the wearisome monotony of the so-called dancing itself, our select company of sight-seers, intent on prying into 'life' in Keneh, were glad to beat their retreat.

We started for Dendera, to reach which will occupy about an hour's pleasant walk across the grain and bean fields. The road is raised above the level of the plain, which is here rather broad, and the Libyan mountains assume bold, rugged outlines. Most of us rode donkeys, there being generally an

ample supply of those useful animals awaiting the travellers at each landing-place, attended by a motley throng of boys, girls, and men, all intent upon *backsheesh*. A great quantity of rubbish, composed of dried mud, broken tiles, bricks, and heaps of stones, surrounds the ruins, so as to present from a distance the aspect of extensive mounds of earth. But on coming nearer, the temple has a wonderfully perfect appearance, with its noble portico and magnificent columns. After passing under an old archway, with good hieroglyphics cut on its side, you walk, perhaps, 200 yards till the lofty portico is reached, to enter which it is necessary to descend a flight of steps. Though the temple is (for Egypt) of comparatively recent date, being classed by the learned in such matters about the time of the Emperor Tiberius, it is an imposing pile of buildings. You stand in that majestic vestibule, 100 feet long by 70 broad, and gaze upwards at the ponderous stone roof supported by twenty-four grand columns, each 60 feet high and nearly 9 feet in diameter. The capitals of these pillars are great blocks of stone, measuring 10 feet every way, their four sides being sculptured into the calm, serene features of the goddess Athor, the Egyptian Venus, to whom the temple is supposed to be dedicated.

On the stone roof is traced that celebrated representation of the signs of the zodiac which has given rise to much learned commentary. Pillars, roof, and walls are alike covered with a series of marvellously minute and perfect hieroglyphics, which would tax the erudition of a Wilkinson

or Lepsius to decipher. Unfortunately, however, the smoke of torches used by numerous travellers has greatly blackened the walls, rendering many of the figures difficult to trace. It would be vain to attempt any details of the immense series of mystic hieroglyphics which cover every portion, both internally and externally, of this wonderful temple, where great chambers, dark and dread, succeed one another, until you reach the inner sanctum of its priesthood. Many side chambers, of smaller size, open out of the principal ones, and off one of the former a small square aperture admits into a long, narrow, intensely dark passage which surrounds the large hall. Then by a staircase of very limited size, though quite easy to ascend, you gain the roof of the temple, which is constructed of massive oblong blocks of stone. On its external walls are many elegantly cut figures; among them, on the west side, a supposed representation of no less famous a personage than Cleopatra, that witching queen, who committed such havoc in the affections of several distinguished Romans of old. Great quantities of bees, however, have taken considerable liberties with the features of the frail Egyptian beauty, and their nests of wax or mud completely plaster over and obliterate many of the figures.

No part of the temple, however, is to be compared with the portico, which has something exceedingly grand and impressive about it. I stood alone in its dark recesses, after our party had left, gazing on the gigantic columns towering aloft in the gloom, while a stillness, solemn and profound

almost as that of the grave, invited to reverent musings over the mighty past of this mysterious country and people, their marvellous enterprises, their skill in architecture, their rare intellectual lore, their strange rites and religious ceremonies. How striking, imposing, yet miserably degrading. Here, in this very temple, a later form of worship, still more enslaving to the senses of its votaries, had apparently been celebrated, enriched with the elegant fables of heathen mythology.

But enough of Dendera; let us hasten on to royal Thebes, the wondrous city of an 'hundred gates,' whose foundation dates back to some 2,000 years before the birth of our Lord, the capital of the kingdom of the Pharaohs when at the height of their vast power. Its mighty remains are situated in the midst of a great green plain, which extends on both sides of the river, and is hemmed in by those huge natural bulwarks, the towering ranges of the Libyan and Arabian mountains. First in order, we come to the ruins of the great Palace of Luxor, quite close to the riverside, from whence an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes, now sadly mutilated and destroyed, leads to the temple of Karnak. The principal entrance to the ruins of Luxor is very fine. On each side of the gateway were once two noble obelisks of red granite, nearly 80 feet high, one of which was, with infinite labour, removed to Paris, and now stands in the Place de la Concorde. Between the obelisk and gateway are two huge sitting granite statues of Rameses II., each 44 feet high, but unfortunately the sand has accumulated so as to cover

everything except the head and shoulders. Their features wear the usual majestic expression of repose and grandeur which characterises all the statues of this great king. Beyond this are ranges of immense pillars and portions of gateways, porticoes, and vast halls, but no care whatever is taken of these great ruins, for the *fellaheen* have built their mud hovels in and about the temple, so as totally to disfigure it.

After passing through the dirty village of Luxor and the fields beyond, you walk along the double avenue of sphinxes, and arrive at a fine gateway, or pylon, as the correct name is, erected by Ptolemy Euergetes. It is of imposing dimensions, having massive side walls, profusely covered with figures, and enormous oblong blocks of stone are laid transversely to form the roof. This is the actual commencement of the gigantic ruins of Karnak, which assuredly must realise the most exalted anticipations of all reasonable travellers. The pylon stands alone, but a hundred yards beyond is a temple adorned with very large pillars and ponderous entablatures all covered with hieroglyphics. Beyond this, a little to the left, you reach the grand entrance to the temple of Karnak, which is supposed to be that of Ammon, the Egyptian Jupiter. An immense gateway opens into the great outer court of the temple, which is 275 feet by 329, and has a covered corridor on each side. A double row of pillars once ran down the middle, but now only one single column remains perfect, though there are portions of five others. Beyond is the entrance to the great hall itself, certainly one

of the wonders of the world, whose dimensions are 170 feet by 329 feet. Its roof is supported by a central avenue of twelve stupendous columns, each 62 feet high and nearly 12 feet in diameter; also 122 lesser columns 42 feet high and 9 in diameter, extend in regular rows parallel with the central pillars. Two large towers close in the hall on this side, and beyond is a perfect wilderness of desolation. Vast heaps of enormous blocks of sandstone are piled one on another, in every conceivable form, as if some tremendous earthquake had destroyed the buildings. Amidst this chaos of ruins two fine obelisks rise out of the mass—one 92 feet high, the other a good deal less, and injured about the base. Great fragments of granite are strewed about, being portions of another large obelisk which once stood here; and as I sat on one of those blocks towards sunset, when all around was still and deserted, the whole scene was one of impressive grandeur. I could not help reflecting with astonishment upon the wonderful power which had raised these great monuments, and the equally great force which must have been exerted to destroy them. Still more striking was the sight of the colossal remains when I revisited them by moonlight. Then, in the pale radiance of the lustrous orb of night, all was softened, subdued, and pervaded by the most intense repose; the deathlike calm only broken by the distant baying of a watchdog, or the shrill screech of some wandering owl. The wilderness of ruins looked more awfully desolate than ever; each lofty obelisk gleamed cold and ghostly in the moonlight, and the great rows of columns,

partly shrouded in deep shade, partly illumined by the moon's wan rays, added powerfully to the weird grandeur of the scene.

The usual practice of our party was to take lunch at a certain period of the day most agreeable to all of us. Our dragoman invariably accompanied us, and the expeditions on shore, in fact, resolved themselves into a series of pic-nics, with the usual accessories held to be indispensable at such gatherings; that is to say, an ample supply of cold fowls, tongue, hard-boiled eggs, and similar *al fresco* edibles, was stowed away in a hamper, and you may be quite sure that in a company where the Anglo-Saxon element so largely predominated there was no lack of pale ale, bottled stout, and dry sherry. Not the least interesting or agreeable of the day's occupations was our much-appreciated luncheon, which, the time we visited Karnak, was spread out in the great hall, whose mighty columns afforded a grateful shade from the powerful rays of the sun. We all took up our positions in the way that we found most comfortable. Our jovial professor reclined upon a gigantic fallen capital and discoursed with volubility, in very good English, upon the great Rameses, the excellent cold turkey our dragoman had provided, the theory of beauty, and other matters. The American ladies, who were always a centre of attraction to the gallant gentlemen of our party, were accommodated with shawls, rugs, and other comforts, to lessen the decidedly unpleasant effect of too immediate a contact with the sculptured figures of heroes and gods, against which they rested their

fair forms. Our travelled Hibernians, who were enthusiastic sketchers, did not give that amount of deliberate attention to the serious business of the luncheon which might have been expected; and the charms of cold roast chickens, with the herbaceous accompaniment of fresh salad, were actually disregarded for the pleasure of taking a correct copy of the sculptured portrait of some defunct Pharaoh holding in both hands several struggling prisoners by the hair of their heads. But every one to his taste; and, indeed, due justice was done to the viands, to which pleasant *badinage* and chaff succeeded while cigars or cigarettes shed their aromatic fragrance around.

One most unseemly feature of these pic-nic visits to the marvellous Egyptian ruins was strongly, but unsuccessfully protested against by us. The dragoman would persist in taking a horrible dinner-bell with him, so as to keep the party together, by its incessant clangour, when we were in danger of straggling too far among the temples and huge ruins, and so delaying our progress. Imagine the result of this dreadful bell-ringing amidst the majestic glories of Karnak, or the cavernous solitudes of the Tombs of the Kings! It certainly had a ludicrous effect, and was a very decided step from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Thebes is a favourite stopping-place for all dahabeahs going up the river, and there were some five or six of them at anchor when we arrived. One very large dahabeah flying the British flag had on board a gentleman and his wife, the former a well-known and respected landed proprietor in the

west of Scotland, in addition to being one of the merchant princes of Glasgow. Along with them were two young friends from the vicinity of the romantic Vale of Leven, whose charms have been so sweetly sung by one of Scotland's distinguished sons; and as I knew the whole party, I enjoyed two very agreeable evenings on board the splendid dahabeah, whose hospitalities were so gracefully dispensed to a party of guests by Mr. and Mrs. R. Little did I dream that the genial host would, a few short months afterwards, fill an untimely grave beside the waters of the Danube!

As a rule, you are very safe to encounter friends at Thebes, and as by the steamer's regulations we were to spend three days here, we had time to organise expeditions, arrange for transmission of letters, purchase antiquities and photographs, and compare notes with those who travelled in the good old luxurious dahabeah. The first night of our arrival we were duly favoured with a visit from the inevitable Mr. Smith, an American gentleman, who has lived here for fourteen years, and interests himself, to a considerable extent, in the antiquities of the spot. Mr. Smith appeared to have no very exalted opinion of the whole system of affairs in Egypt, and I suspect he would be glad enough to exchange his abode for some more civilised locality.

Another invariable visitor on board dahabeahs and steamers is Mustapha Aga, who officiated as British consul. He speaks very fair English, is a courteous and cheerful elderly gentleman, and greatly enjoys the good fare which he gets from hospitable travellers. Mustapha does a good business in

scarabei and other antiquities, gives unlimited coffee and pipes of tobacco if you pay him a visit, and will be happy to improvise an entertainment by the *ghewazee*, for which, however, a due consideration must be paid. Several of the European Powers are represented by consuls here, most of whom do a good photograph and antiquity business. As usual, near the landing-place there is generally a miscellaneous collection of the noisy troublesome characters who wait for travellers, some of whom are difficult to shake off.

Now let us cross the river to view the great remains of other temples and tombs which attest to the magnificence of Thebes in ages gone by. After walking across the fertile plain for some miles, you first arrive at the smaller temple of Medinet Habou. It is much destroyed, and a ruinous Arab village which once flourished here interferes with the picturesque remains of the temple. But the greater temple beyond is well worthy a visit. A massive outer wall of sandstone with some fine figures sculptured on it, faces you as you approach the entrance. The walls are very thick, and passing into the first court of the temple, you see on how great a scale it was constructed. In the hall beyond, four rows of lofty pillars running down each side form a noble corridor, and everywhere are sculptured the most spirited and admirably preserved hieroglyphics and figures. There are numerous battle scenes, kings driving in chariots over prostrate captives, gods receiving offerings, priests sacrificing, almost all in colours, the tints of which are wonderfully fresh. The ceiling of the corridors, composed of great horizontal

stone blocks, is of a beautiful sky blue, studded with golden stars. From this point to the so-called *memnonium* is more than a mile, and here we find some noble remains of sculptures. The temple was large—540 feet long by 200, and majestic remains of columns and statues, a good many of them still in position, testify to its former magnificence. Here are the huge fragments of the stupendous colossal granite statue of Rameses the Great, which measured 63 feet round the shoulders and 13 feet from the crown of the head to the top of the shoulders. The Arabs, who are sad iconoclasts, have cut millstones out of his face, but his destruction, and that of many of the Titanic buildings of Thebes, is probably due to the Persian conqueror Cambyses. As Dean Stanley remarks, with his usual eloquence and correctness, 'nothing which now exists in the world can give any notion of what the effect must have been when he was erect. Nero towering above the Colosseum may have been something like it, but he was of bronze and Rameses was of solid granite. Nero was standing without any object; Rameses was resting in awful majesty after the conquest of the then known world. No one who entered that building, whether it were temple or palace, could have thought of anything else but that stupendous being who had thus raised himself up above the whole world of gods and men.'

Our luncheon party this day was held under the grateful shade of the noble columns of the *memnonium*, and these grand fragments of antiquity were, in addition, honoured by the exalted presence of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburgh,

who had a party of friends with him. All our way up the Nile as far as Assouan, and subsequently at Shepheard's Hotel, and at Ismailia, we were constantly encountering His Royal and Serene Highness, who, by the way, seemed a most unpretending and courteous gentleman, with a pleasant smile and a mild blue eye, though no doubt, like that of Mars, it could 'threaten and command.' This redoubtable warrior, who certainly made an example of the unhappy 'men with muskets,' so liberally supplied for slaughter by M. Gambetta and his friends in 1870, seemed to be more intent upon investigating the mysteries of a cold pie than inspecting the colossal remains of the mighty Rameses, which lay in mournful grandeur at his elbow. There were, in addition to his gentlemen friends, some four or five ladies, attired in excessively plain style, with hats and blue veils on, and simple brown travelling dresses. By far the most 'dressy' of the grand-ducal party were the domestics who served the lunch, two of them being magnificent individuals in a sort of stage brigand costume. Our own two excellent German friends 'fore gathered,' to use a Scotch phrase, with their distinguished fellow-countryman, and were received by the Grand Duke with flattering courtesy and consideration. Still, although it may be very delightful to British, and most especially to American, travellers, to rub shoulders with grand dukes and grand duchesses amidst the glories of Thebes, we found it the reverse of agreeable to observe that, invariably, at the landing-places the best donkeys and least objectionable donkey-drivers were secured for the ducal party

while our noble persons were fain to be carried by broken-winded, sore-backed, half-starved, and miserable wretches, innocent of saddles or anything to mitigate the severity of their hard unyielding backs.

Some little distance from the *memnonium*, on the way to the river, are the two celebrated Colossi of the plain, the vast sitting statues of Amunoph, which form very conspicuous objects in the landscape. They are all that remain of an avenue of eighteen similar statues, and the fable goes that when the morning sun's rays beat upon the face of one of the sitting giants which still rests here in grim repose, his lips uttered musical sounds. They are certainly grand figures, with their hands resting on the knees, but no feature of the face can be traced on either, while great cracks and seams extend across their bodies in all directions. Still, their immense height, about 60 feet, their noble outlines, and the magnificent background of red rocky mountains which at this point run up to a considerable elevation, form a picture that strongly impresses the spectator.

The Tombs of the Kings must form our closing glance at the wonders of Thebes. They are situated some miles from the river in a most sterile, dreary, scorching and desolate valley of the western limestone mountains. Great burnt-looking rocky precipices rise up all around, not a blade of grass is to be seen, the path is a mere dried-up watercourse, and everywhere the silence of death reigns around. The tombs are hewn out of the solid rock, and may more fittingly be termed palaces than tombs, for they are entered by long

passages which lead to chamber after chamber of lofty proportions until, at last, the dark hall is reached which contained the sarcophagus of the king, with his embalmed remains within its 'ponderous and marble jaws.' Each wall and roof is covered with vividly life-like representations of scenes and objects which, when the monarch was alive, must have every day met his eyes. Scenes of hunting, fishing, banqueting, sporting, manufacturing, and agriculture — all are depicted on the walls in colours, fresh as if executed but yesterday. Most minute representations of the daily life and domestic economy of a wealthy Egyptian magnate testify to the exceeding luxury in which these persons lived. In one celebrated tomb, called Bruce's, or the Harpers' tomb, are depicted most curious drawings of furniture, chairs and sofas just like our own, jars, vases, mirrors, gold, silver, and glass ornaments, agricultural implements and similar articles. Immense labour must have been bestowed on the decorations of some of these tombs, and yet all this profuse ornamentation was, on the death of the king, intended to be hidden for ever from mortal gaze; for, after burial, the tomb was closed, the entrance carefully blocked up and concealed, apparently through a jealous desire on the part of the dead monarch that his august remains should never be profaned by sacrilegious hand.

'Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?'

Vain, futile hope! For the all-pervading English traveller, or scientific man, coolly appropriates the royal mummy, and packs it off in a hamper per rail and steamer to London; and in some Crystal Palace or provincial museum all that is mortal of a mighty Pharaoh or Ptolemy may be seen in its own particular glass case, for the consideration of a trifling current coin of the realm, possibly—on certain days of the week—free.

Some of our party, instead of returning through that terrible scorching, white, stony valley, climbed up the steep mountainous ascent at the back of the chief range of tombs, and were rewarded by a glorious view over the entire plain of Thebes which lies at your feet. In front is a tremendous precipice, hundreds of feet deep, at whose base may be traced a confused mass of ancient remains extending all the way to the *memnonium*. Beyond come the temples of Medinet Habou, the noble Colossi of the plain, in their solitary grandeur, the rich, green, fertile zone of vegetation, the broad glistening river, and the wilderness of ruins towards Luxor and Karnak, the whole picture bounded by the opposite ridge of Arabian mountains.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST CATARACT TO CAIRO.

ASSOUAN at last! Here our steamer stops on her upward voyage, for this is the extreme point to which she can well proceed. After a brief visit to the famous ancient granite quarries of Syene, the Island of Elephantine, and the beautiful, solemn, and fascinating Philae, we must reluctantly resume our return to Cairo. As we near Assouan, where many of the dahabeahs also terminate their upward voyage, the river scenery changes its character considerably. The sandy desert becomes of a deeper yellow tinge, the rocks are darker and more sombre in colour, while only a small strip of vegetation extends between the river's bank and the slopes of the mountains.

Assouan is beautifully situated, being embosomed in palm groves, surrounded by rocky hills, having the gracefully outlined woody Island of Elephantine opposite in mid-stream, and the steep, sloping banks of the valley, variegated with a few scattered ruins of houses and mosques, close in the view. Here, too, congregate a number of dancing-girls, profusely decorated with jewellery, gaudy scarves, and other

female finery; and even more demonstrative in their advances are a legion of vendors of red clay pottery manufactures, ostrich feathers, ivory-hilted daggers, old coins, glass bangles, turquoises, fancy silks, warlike implements, and similar articles suitable for the taste of the British tourist. At Assouan also you experience your first sensation of the delights, such as they are, of camel-riding, as the 'ship of the desert' is put in requisition to transport you to Philae, nearly five miles off.

After threading your way through the poor bazaars and lanes of the straggling village, you come out upon the granite quarries, which extend in different directions till they cover a considerable area of ground. Then the track leads along a broad strip of gravelly desert, at a distance of more than a mile from the river's bank, until you reach the few scattered mud houses a little way below Philae. Accompanied by a friend, I made my way off the main track down to the river, to see what one hears so often mentioned, the 'First Cataract.' A very poor specimen of a cataract indeed it is! The river is confined between narrow ridges of rocks, which are scattered about in picturesque confusion, and the stream rushes past them with some velocity and turmoil, but there is little perceptible fall or whirl of troubled waters. A man swam down the principal rapid for our benefit, and we were besieged by a lot of small naked boys for *backsheesh*. Some little distance above this, the banks of the river exhibit a marvellous peculiarity and grandeur of outline. Great fantastic masses of black porphyry and granite tower upwards

from numerous small islands studding the river's bed, and in many cases they assume the forms of ruined castles or monstrous figures seemingly carved in the adamantine rock by some Titanic hand.

Philae is a small island, but completely covered with ruins which crown its heights, and extend in terraces along its sides, while palm, acacia, and other luxuriant trees clothe the mouldering columns and prostrate capitals with a lovely surrounding of green. The large temple is dedicated to Isis, and is profusely decorated with coloured figures, the painting of which is vivid and fresh. Many of the capitals of the pillars are bright with rich blue and green colouring, and some noble avenues of columns extend in lofty perspective from the main building towards the river. The sandstone of which these remains are constructed is of a light brown tint, and this colour predominates in the small, elegant, roofless temple called 'Pharaoh's bed.' In some of the inner sanctuaries of the larger temple, a deep solemn gloom prevails, and the contrast is dazzling when you emerge into the glorious sunshine, with the intensely blue sky of Africa forming an azure canopy overhead. From the top of a lofty pylon, at the entrance of the great temple, a varied panorama is seen—a shimmering, silvery, calm river, dark, frowning, weird rocks, groups of palm and sycamore trees, dusky villages, slender strips of cultivated land, and the distant mountains of Nubia bounding the horizon.

Elephantine Island, opposite to Assouan, should be visited, though there is little to see beyond a few small ruins, and a

Nilometer for taking the height of the inundation, consisting merely of a staircase partially covered over, and open to the river at its foot, with a few measuring marks notched on its sides. The island appears to be chiefly populated by women and children, the latter attired in the scantiest possible costume, though the girls had invariably the usual fringe of leather cut into thongs round their waist. They were very importunate for us to buy shells, pebbles, necklaces, and other trinkets. We did purchase a good many of the articles sold in the Assouan bazaars, at a very moderate price; especially some really elegantly figured coffee cups and drinking vessels, with delicate arabesque patterns traced on them. Some of us also did a little amateur banking with a gentleman in an English dahabeah, who, having spent all his available coin, was anxious to turn into this useful commodity one or two of his circular notes.

At length, on Monday, February 5, we very reluctantly commenced our homeward voyage a little after noon. We had been compelled to leave unexplored the wonders of Nubia and the majestic rock-hewn temple of Ipsambul, for, as Tam O'Shanter found to his cost,

'Nae man can tether time or tide.'

That afternoon we passed the fine remains of the temple of Kom Ombos, which are placed high up the steep river's bank in a very commanding and striking position. Standing in front of the temple, you have an extensive view over plain and river, which here makes a rather sharp curve. The

temple is built of enormous blocks of sandstone, and the pillars, thirteen of which remain, are of huge girth and decorated with massive capitals and cornices, but the drifting sand has filled up the entire building as far as nearly three-fourths the height of the columns. The architraves and blocks of stone forming the roof are of very large proportions, some of them more than 20 feet long, and the entire structure is of unusual massiveness and solidity, considering its dimensions. Not very far from this are the extensive sandstone quarries of Silsillis, from whence the materials were derived to build the great temple at Thebes and elsewhere. The principal quarries are on your left hand in ascending the river, but on the other side there are some smaller ones, and several curious grottoes cut out of the rock; one of the latter is decorated with four pillars, and the corridor, which is covered with some rude hieroglyphics, is arched. At this point the river is confined between rocky banks, within comparatively a narrow channel, and the current is consequently strong. Here we encountered a very large dahabeah, having on board a party of eleven tourists, ladies and gentlemen, 'personally conducted' by Mr. Gaze, a rival *entrepreneur* to the far-famed Mr. Cook. We had some conversation with one of the party, an English clergyman, and learned that, owing to incessant contrary winds, they had rather a dreary time of it, though otherwise he spoke favourably of the *menage* and mode of life.

Our steamer was brought-up on the right bank, and we crossed to the other side in a clumsy, overcrowded boat. The

quarries are a very interesting sight in their undisturbed silence and neglect, without a solitary human being stirring, where once so many myriads congregated who made the banks of Old Nile to resound with their strokes and discordant din. There are acres upon acres of deep excavations, most of them heaped up with great accumulations of beautifully smooth sand, though here and there the wind has fashioned singular ridges and furrows in the soft mass. Out of these hollows the great faces of rock rise, from whence layer upon layer of immense stones had, thousands of years ago, been patiently excavated. Indenting them in all directions may be seen the marks of picks and wedges, sometimes also grooves for ropes, and innumerable evidences of the nature of the work performed with so much labour. The dullest imagination can have little difficulty in peopling this scene with its once teeming array of occupants, their strange costumes and barbarous dialect, all labouring for the glorifying of some mysterious potentate whom they were taught to reverence as a god.

Esneh was our next stopping-place, where we brought-to for some time, to enable us to see the noble portico of an ancient temple built in the time of the Emperor Tiberius. The rest of the building is covered over with rubbish, and judging from what has already been unearthed, future excavators would be richly rewarded for their labours. You enter from a narrow street in the town, descending by a flight of stairs rudely constructed of earth and blocks of wood, until you stand under the grand portico. It has twenty-four very

fine massive columns, all quite perfect, from the base upwards, and a deep gloom prevails in this majestic vestibule, owing to its being so much below the level of the surrounding ground. The capitals of the columns are almost all of different patterns, some being a series of palm leaves, others lotus leaves and flowers, some a mixture of both plants, others of fluted and wreathed patterns—in short, a rich feast awaits the eye of the architect or archæologist. The pillars are all covered with figures, but not so sharply cut as in many other temples we saw, but the walls, sides, and roof of the portico are decorated with large and well-cut hieroglyphics. On the roof is a zodiac, something similar to that of Dendera, but so blackened by the smoke of travellers' torches that it is difficult to trace its formation.

We were hospitably treated by the governor of the town to coffee, which was brought by two of his emissaries, for our behoof, and, seated on a few wooden chairs, we drank the fragrant beverage, and leisurely surveyed the noble columns, for whose disinterment travellers are indebted to the enterprise of Mehemet Ali. After our curiosity had been satisfied, we wandered away through some of the streets of the town, accompanied by an admiring throng of natives of both sexes. There is certainly not much to see, nor anything tempting to purchase. We watched the operation of grinding corn between two revolving stones kept in motion by a donkey, and looked into a mosque, where a number of men were engaged in worship.

Here, as at various other of our stopping-places, we took

in a supply of coal, which is kept stored in heaps surrounded by a slight fence of dried reeds, for the use of the steamers. A dirty disagreeable operation it was, filling the atmosphere with clouds of fine black dust, and making a mess of everything about the decks. The work is performed by a number of the poor peasants, chiefly women and children, who are forced to do this without any remuneration from the authorities. The unfortunate *fellaheen*, who were half-naked and miserable, carried the coals on their heads in small baskets, and they ran up and down the bank in Indian file, urged on by one or two men with whips, who superintended the work. It takes a number of them to get through the job, though you may be sure they are not allowed to linger over the operation. When it is over, they all congregate on the bank and look with interest upon the steamer and its passengers, who, on such occasions, appear on deck, and occasionally fling copper coins and oranges among the dusky throng.

Between this place and Edfou we got an excellent view of the famous constellation the Southern Cross, which, for a short time, appears above the horizon in these latitudes. We had given instructions to be called in good time; and accordingly at about three in the morning, I, among others, was roused from my balmy slumbers to go on deck. Here I was soon after joined by four or five other gentlemen, for the ladies did not venture to put in an appearance, and we were rewarded with an excellent view of the southern stranger, which is a cluster of brilliant stars, more of the

outline of a kite than a cross, the centre star being very indistinct. A glorious night it was, the dark purple sky enamelled with the clear lustrous jewels of pale fire from one horizon to the other, and all earth and river hushed into profound repose, broken only by the faintest ripple of the water. Next morning, upon our rallying the members of our party who preferred the charms of Morpheus to the glories of the astronomical display which we had witnessed, we were assured that they also had seen the constellation the previous night, soon after ten o'clock. Naturally we were strongly sceptical on this point; but it was mere 'chaff,' for there is no doubt that the veritable cross only is seen above the horizon, where we lay, for a short period in the small hours of the morning.

Edfou, which is but a short distance from Esneh, has for its great attraction the temple partly built by Ptolemy Philometer, certainly by far the most perfect in point of preservation of any in Egypt. A walk of half-an-hour brings you from the landing-place to the modern, dirty town, with its mud-built houses, squalid population, barking dogs, and other nuisances. You pass right through the town, and then come upon the immense temple, to enter which you descend into a sort of hollowed-out moat running all round the building, which, at one time, was nearly altogether covered over with earth. The façade of the temple is noble and imposing, with its two grand pyramidal towers forming the pylon, each of them 120 feet high. A staircase, built in the thickness of the wall, leads to the summit of each tower;

and very remarkable it is to see, more than 100 feet from the ground, gigantic blocks of sandstone laid in position. The lofty walls on both sides of the pylon are sculptured with colossal figures, and we see the arrangement here by which the enormous flagstaffs were held fast, so as to overtop even the huge towers. Four very deep grooves are cut in the pylon, two on each side of the entrance-door, extending from the ground more than half-way up to the top, so as to receive the great beams of wood. The vast outer court of the temple is of noble proportions, and round three sides of it there are massive columns, while it is entirely paved with stone. Beyond this succeeds a hall, or rather portico, leading into the temple itself, with eighteen fine columns supporting the roof. Then comes a dark vestibule, with twelve grand columns, and out of this are entrances to several small dark chambers used by the priests. After passing through two small courts, the *adytum*, or sanctuary, is reached, where stands an immense mass of grey granite, hollowed out so as to form a sort of sentry-box, which is in fact the *sanctum sanctorum*, where was kept the sacred hawk, the emblem of the divinity of the temple.

We ascended by a tortuous staircase to the roof of the temple, and gazed with wonderment into its dark and mysterious recesses. The pavements, halls, pillars, and roofs are nearly perfect, and the interior of the vast building is kept scrupulously clean, no village Arabs being suffered to enter its precincts. A narrow open passage runs the whole way round the building; between it and the outside wall of

circumvallation, and on either wall of this, are sculptured most interesting and remarkably perfect pictorial representations. It would take weeks to examine these minute figures, and even to attempt to describe them would occupy far too great a space in this humble volume. We were all profoundly impressed with the grandeur of this very perfect temple; and, upon the whole, it brings before one the actual picture which a great Egyptian temple of old must have presented when it was ready to receive a motley crowd of worshippers summoned to behold the imposing rites celebrated by a royal priesthood.

But time goes on, and I must hasten my indulgent readers down the stream, merely stopping an hour at Luxor to enable our passengers to enquire for letters and buy a few photographs, passing Thebes, Keneh, and Dendera, until we bring up at Bellianeh, close to a recently constructed landing-place for the Viceroy. His Highness was expected to visit a recent acquisition in the sugar-factory line, and to enable him to make a short tour inland a road was being specially got up for the occasion. Hundreds of unfortunate wretches were at work digging away at the hard soil with miserable wooden shovels and picks, all for the purpose of enabling the honoured donkey which carried His Highness's rather corpulent person to move along without stumbling. However, in this instance we were disposed to look leniently upon the forced labour system, for it enabled us to get the benefit of a road where none formerly existed! After a time we struck across the fields of barley and beans, and, at a distance of nearly eight

miles from the river, we found the ruins of which we were in search. They were those of the famous temple of Abydus, and are now all that remain of a once great city which flourished in its pristine magnificence about 3,500 years ago. It was second only to majestic Thebes, and here Osiris and the great Rameses were buried. The ruins are on a spacious scale. There is a large vestibule, the roof supported by twenty-four fine columns in two rows, and an inner and larger hall with thirty-six columns in three rows. Various smaller chambers open out from the large halls, in some of which may be seen the singular arched roofs peculiar to this temple. The vast blocks of stone, perhaps twenty or twenty-five feet long, the ends of which rest on either wall, are hollowed out in the centre into the form of an arch—an operation involving considerable labour to the stonemasons of the period. Many of the smooth stone walls are covered with finely sculptured designs of gods, kings, warriors, horse and foot combatants, animals, birds, &c., some of them in a condition absolutely perfect, though the cunning hand that wrought them withered into dust thirty-five centuries ago. A good many of the figures are coloured, the faces, arms, and legs red, the ornaments and dress yellow. From this temple was removed, in 1818, the famous stone tablet, containing a list of the various kings and their dynasties, which is now a valued possession of the British Museum. Close to the great temple is the smaller one built by Osiris, which is in utter ruins, but still beautiful amidst its desolation. Here the traveller sees great blocks of highly polished oriental

alabaster, that once formed part of the sanctuary, now lying scattered about for all comers to break away as many specimens as they please—a most reprehensible bit of vandalism, by the way.

We have now pretty well exhausted the programme which is set before voyagers in the Khedive's passenger steamers; and from this point hardly any stoppages are made until you reach Memphis, or rather the place for disembarking to get to the site of that ancient city. This was our last excursion from the steamer; and by half-past four on the afternoon of Monday, February 12, we reached the port of Boulac and resumed our former berth close to the fleet of dahabeahs.[1]

And so closed our brief glimpse at some of the wonders of this remarkable land, on almost every rood of which one might exclaim, 'Stop! for thy tread is on an empire's dust.' From the very earliest ages of the world, down the long stream of time till the present day, the greatest names of history have been associated with Egypt. Thither wandered the early patriarchs from the scorching Chaldean deserts,

[1] I had been so fortunate as to see the ruins of Memphis, the Serapeum, and the marvellous Tombs of the Bulls, under very favourable circumstances. The Viceroy had put a special train at the disposal of a well-known English nobleman, who had given His Highness the use of his splendid town house on the occasion of the latter's visit to London. I was kindly asked to join the party, amongst whom were some scientific men of European celebrity, Sir William Armstrong being one of their number. The day was lovely, the company most agreeable, and the excursion altogether extremely successful. The princely style in which Lord and Lady D. travelled in Egypt, with their retinue of attendants, must have rather surprised the poverty-stricken natives of the country.

and instead of the poor tents and brick hovels of their native land, they found all the colossal temples and gorgeous palaces of a royal priesthood. What mighty names—many of them surrounded with a gilded halo of fabulous renown, scarcely dimmed even by the mist of ages—have interwoven themselves with the majestic traditions of this mysterious land. A princely list of conquerors blazes in dazzling lustre on the horizon of its history; some with the lurid, blinding, momentary flash of a meteor, others irradiating the annals of their time by a long career of glory. Here, with all the pomp of barbaric oriental splendour, came the ruthless Persian Cambyses; to him, long years after, succeeds the great Alexander, searching for more worlds to conquer; then a glittering galaxy of names enshrined in Roman annals of conquest, the magnanimous Pompey, the politic and pleasure-loving Mark Antony, the illustrious Cæsar, this brilliant triumvirate, who, after subduing the inhabitants of the then known world, were proud to own themselves vanquished by the bewitching fascinations of a Cleopatra; and in modern times the genius of Napoleon found fitting subject for display in this narrow land, so prolific in mighty achievements.

But other reasons exist, apart from the grandeur of its past history and the rare charm of its intellectual lore, to invest the land of Egypt with undying interest in our eyes. Here were enacted those extraordinary wonders by which the Almighty proved to the world that He had chosen a people, who should be the founders and pioneers of that true

worship which alike superseded the vile rites of ancient superstition, as well as the dreamy mythology of polished Greece, with all its vague aspirations after an ideal morality. The sacred story of that exodus of the chosen, rendered ever memorable by the great and miraculous deliverance in the terrible passage of the Red Sea, and culminating in the sublime revelation from Heaven amidst the awful glories of Mount Sinai, can surely never fail to attach supreme interest to the fertile valley of the Nile. To one privileged as I was to follow the wanderings of the children of Israel, from the land of Goshen, along the sterile Arabian peninsula, until I stood on the summit of that majestic mountain where once the Almighty himself condescended to appear in His glory, it may be allowed to dwell with reverential fondness upon so magnificent a theme. The awe-stricken traveller stands overcome amidst the soul-stirring associations of this scene, overwhelmed by the towering, precipitous, red granite crags, the profound chasm-like valleys, the unutterable desolation and silence which reigns around; above all, by the sight of the vast isolated form of the sacred mountain, which rocked to its adamantine centre at the dreadful presence of Jehovah, while the trumpet sounded 'exceeding loud and terrible.'

By the side of so tremendous a Revelation, how utterly do the miserable sneers of sceptics, the drivellings of modern atheists, the presumptuous deductions of science, the cold speculations of vague rationalism, sink into nothingness! Only allow the infidel ideas—which, alas! are becoming but

too prevalent in our land—to prevail unchallenged, and to what avail would be our boasted prosperity, our gigantic national wealth, our vast international trade, our iron girdles transmitting the keen electric spark from hemisphere to hemisphere?

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRACK OF THE ISRAELITES TO SINAI.

THE latter half of February is an excellent time to prepare for the start for Mount Sinai and the Desert, because the excessive cold felt in the high latitudes of the peninsula during December and January will be avoided, and the traveller will reach the Holy Land after the 'early rains' are over.

His first care, of course, will be to secure an efficient dragoman, whom he should have engaged previous to his voyage up the Nile, so that on his return all will be ready for a start. Dragomans abound in Alexandria, Cairo, Beyrout, and Jerusalem; but the difficulty is to get good ones. They hang about all the hotels—pleasant-spoken, agreeable Orientals, with their testimonials ever at hand to exhibit to intending travellers. Their charges vary according to the number of gentlemen of the party, the time to be occupied on the journey, and other circumstances. From 1*l.* 10*s.* to 2*l.* per diem, for each member of the party, is a very usual charge; but if you propose to go to Petra, the scale will be immediately raised. One crack Alexandria dragoman gave me his terms as follows:—for a single gentleman, 4*l.* per

diem; two gentlemen, 5*l.* per diem; three, at 6*l.* a day; and four, at 7*l.* each day. But a good deal will depend upon the fact of there being many dragomans disengaged at the time they are wanted, and especially upon the length of the engagement. The one that we were fortunate enough to get was Achmet-el-Fichawi, an inhabitant of Cairo, and an excellent specimen of the liberal, good-tempered and obliging dragoman, so difficult to fall in with. It is usual in the contract—a very elaborate document, divided into some twenty heads, containing minute specifications—to fix what sum of money shall be paid before leaving Cairo, what at Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem, and other places. This arrangement, however, we did not adhere to; and, in fact, with a trustworthy dragoman, such as our excellent Achmet, the provisions of the agreement become a mere matter of form.

We had arranged, before starting on our Nile expedition, the day we would be ready to leave Cairo, and Achmet had been busy laying in the necessary stock of provisions for the journey. He had negotiated with one of the sheikhs of the Tawarah tribe of Arabs, who have the right to convey travellers all over the peninsula of Mount Sinai, for the proper escort and supply of camels which would be needed. There are always a number of these Arab magnates hovering near the principal hotels, and they soon get together the necessary number of their followers. Camels, tents, and Bedawin are all at hand; and the traveller has the satisfaction of seeing his tent set up on the most convenient plot of waste ground

near his hotel; and may entertain, as we did, his friends to luncheon or dinner in the canvas dwelling which is to be his home for the next sixty days.

Of course it will be understood that the sum per day, quoted above, does not include wine or liquors of any sort; therefore those who propose to indulge in something more stimulating than the infrequent springs of the desert, will do well to pay a visit to some of the establishments where the juice of the grape may be procured to any amount. We eschewed beer, which is expensive and does not go nearly so far as wine, and laid in a good supply of marsala and claret, either of which, mixed with water, forms a refreshing beverage. In the Holy Land no one need desire a better drink than a draught of the glorious pure water which gushes forth so liberally almost in all parts of Palestine; but I must onfess that the water of the desert, though drinkable, is not inviting. The dragoman will go to the shop with his new employers, and submit a list of what he proposes to take with him in the shape of supplies, and assuredly we had no reason to complain of want of liberality in the *cuisine* department. A good supply of tobacco is most necessary, to dispense in gifts to various sheikhs and men in authority who will be encountered *en route*; and a few trifling presents, such as a good clasp knife, a silk *kufiyeh*, or a cheap pistol or two, will be found very much appreciated, and may surmount some awkward difficulties.

As for clothing, very few articles are needed beyond those I mentioned in a previous chapter; but it will be well to see

that a very strong pair of boots are included, if the traveller means to ascend Mount Sinai, Jebel Serbâl, and other giants of the peninsula. A correct aneroid barometer for indicating heights of mountains is an invaluable companion, and a good field-glass or telescope should be taken. Books occupy space, and, as a rule, will not be much read. Murray's invaluable 'Hand-book,' Dean Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' and one or two miscellaneous works, are all that will be needful; for generally most men are too fatigued of an evening, after eight or nine hours' camel-riding, and walking at intervals, to do much study. But a substantial blank book for a journal, a portable ink-bottle and pens, should on no account be omitted; and it ought to be considered a matter of duty to record each day's journeying as fully as possible. Above all, if it is intended to try and reach Petra, at least 60*l.* extra in gold should be carried, over and above the ordinary expenses of each day, as stipulated in the contract.

As a rule it is necessary to go first to Akabah, about six days' journey from the convent of Mount Sinai, to ascertain from Sheikh Mohammed there if the route to the rock-hewn capital of Edom is open. The dragoman will see to getting the necessary letter to the Patriarch of the convent of Mount Sinai, without which admission will be refused.

At length, on February 16, accompanied by my two travelling companions, I set off for Suez, *viâ* Ismailia, so as to see the canal on our way. The gentlemen whose agreeable society I was privileged to share, for the next three

months nearly, were Mr. Charles Ashton a Leicestershire proprietor, formerly in a crack Lancer regiment, and Mr. Edward W. Gere an American gentleman, but who has for some years resided in Gloucester. We agreed that it was needless to start on camels from Cairo, so arranged to meet our dragoman at Suez about the 18th inst., thus giving us time to see the canal. A long tedious journey it is to Ismailia. Leaving Cairo at half-past nine in the morning, we reached the former place at a little after five in the afternoon. The heat in the carriages was considerable, and there is little to repay one in the way of interesting scenery, for it is a mere waste of sand through which the railway winds. At Zagazig, from whence the line branches off to Suez, you get a miserable and very dear lunch or early dinner; but you can make amends for shortcomings at the respectable *table d'hôte* at the Hotel Pagnon at Ismailia. Here we again encountered the Grand Duke and his party, who had secured the best accommodation of the rather small hotel; but as we remained only one night in it, we were little inconvenienced.

Certainly there is little to see at Ismailia, which is a mere street or two of unfinished-looking French houses, most of them cafés and billiard-saloons, with a very deserted, dreary look about them; and a few stunted trees, placed on both sides of the street, are no doubt intended to give the dignity of a *boulevard* to the unpaved thoroughfare. At dinner we met two officials connected with the canal, who spoke excellent English, and gave us a good deal of information as to the country. According to them, the Viceroy is very

rich, and the canal a distinguished success. He does indeed work the forced-labour system to the utmost, but he feeds the workmen; and, when no money remuneration is given, he remits three years of taxation to them. Sugar is his trump card, and all proprietors of sugar-producing lands must sell the produce to the Viceroy at a certain fixed price.

Next morning we disposed of the sights of Ismailia in about half-an-hour, and to see the canal we took places in the small postal steamer as far as Kantara, a station nearly 15 miles off. Lake Timsah, where Ismailia stands, is a broad sheet of blue clear water, and the line of the canal is marked by rows of buoys and beacons at intervals dotting its shallow depths. As recently as 1866, it appears that the lake was a mere swamp, which could be easily crossed on foot. The actual cutting of the canal commences about two miles from the jetty at Ismailia; and, after a curve of a few hundred yards, runs in a straight line for nearly ten miles. The banks have a clearly cut and substantial appearance, and seem hardening in consistency, not being mere loose slopes of sand; while the water is of a deep blue tint, fresh as if flowing straight from the sea, and a gentle current towards Port Said is distinctly visible. The breadth at the water line varies from 190 to 330 feet; the width at bottom of the channel 72 feet; and the depth, in most places, at least 25 feet. Along one bank are rows of telegraph posts; and numerous great iron lifts, apparently for raising the sand from the canal during construction, are still left in position.

We passed several large screw steamers, mostly British,

slowly steaming along; and I observed that they created no wash at all, or the smallest disturbance in the sandy banks; though one, the 'Priam,' of Liverpool, drawing 18 feet of water, stirred up the sand of the bottom considerably. After Ferdane, a small station with one or two wooden houses built at the water's edge, the channel widens to double its previous breadth. Various lakes and pieces of water, some nearly dried up, will be observed on nearing Kantara, beyond which will be seen the broad sheet of Lake Menzaleh. Kantara is a miserable cluster of wooden houses, two of them dignified by the name of hotels, which hold out to passers-by, in several languages, intimation of the fact of dinners and other refreshments being procurable on short notice. On our way back to Ismailia we were afflicted by the presence of a military band sent, out of compliment to serenade the Grand Duke, who persistently played a barbarous march of oriental music, the most hideously discordant to musical ears. Very glad we were to get into the train at four o'clock, and about half-past eight that evening we found ourselves in the well-known and comfortable 'Suez Hotel,' established by the P. & O. Company for the convenience of passengers for India.

The sights of Suez need not occupy the traveller long; but as this is the last place where anything in the way of European necessaries can possibly be purchased, it is well to look through one's wardrobe and portmanteaus. The hotel was very empty, as it was the slack time between the arrival of one steamer and the departure of another, so we had any

quantity of rooms to choose from. One of the days was an Arab festival, or *fantasia*, as the local name for it appears to be, and we strolled through the streets to see the affair. All the people were dressed in gay costumes; the boys and girls with green, yellow, and red silks on, necklaces and bracelets; the men with clean turbans and flowing white robes. In an open space near the town numerous games were going on. 'Merry-go-rounds,' of rude wooden bars, swings with cages, each holding four or five children; a group of Nubians dancing to strange music made by two men with drums, a third with a rude harp, and a fourth, who had a quantity of mussel-shells tied round his waist, by rocking himself from side to side, made his shells sound like castanets. From this we strolled on to the cemetery, and here we saw some curious ceremonies. In one place a father, with his two wives and several children, were all seated at the grave, the man singing a monotonous chant, while the women listened with bowed heads; and there were a good many groups similarly occupied in uttering lamentations over their dead friends.

There is nothing specially striking in the situation of Suez, which is placed at the head of the gulf, with extensive sandy plains environing it on one side, and the fine range of Jebel Atâkah bounds the Egyptian horizon. There are a few tolerably wide unpaved streets in the town, some decent houses, one of which is specially noticeable by the pretty garden surrounding it. One feature is the very long pier, extending nearly two miles into the shallow waters of the gulf, along which the railway runs to where the P. & O.

steamers are moored. The population seems very mixed; Arabs, Bedawin, Greeks, Italians, French, and a few English, all may be encountered in the poor bazaars. Outside of the town is a small camp of British soldiers, through whose courteous colonel, whom we met at Cairo, we heard of our dragoman.

Towards sunset, the view from the plains around Suez is fine. The sun's rays falling on the distant hills bathed them in a rosy hue, and those at our back assumed a cold purple tint; while the deep blue of the calm sea, and the violet colour of the wide Sinaitic desert, completed the picture. There is also a pleasant look-out from the verandah of the hotel, and in the cool evenings this is a capital place to smoke a quiet cigar.

At last we are all ready for the start, and our faithful Achmet comes to take away our baggage, which is to be carried on camels round the head of the gulf, while we take boat across. On February 20 we set sail from Suez in a humble native craft, and a favourable breeze soon carried us past the long pier, until we reached the broad deep blue channel forming the Suez entrance to the canal. Not far from this we landed, and found our dromedaries waiting for us. After due adjustment of the multifarious furniture, bags and trappings, which the obedient animals carry, we took up a comfortable position on the soft Persian rug forming our saddle, and were soon enjoying the novel sensation of camel-riding. Our way lay along the shore for more than two miles, over a firm rough sandy plain, with clearly-marked

tracks or pathways made by travellers and pilgrims. Boulders of stone are scattered about, but there is little vegetation except some wild onion plants. Soon the shore was left, and we turned towards the range of hills on which the setting sun was beating, giving them a beautiful pink colour; and came to a tract of soft sand undulated with small hillocks and shallow *wadys* or hollows, beyond which, in the distance, we caught sight of the palm and tamarisk trees surrounding Ayûn Musa, or Moses' Wells.

I was greatly struck here with the absolute stillness and solitariness of the scene; not a sound could be heard, no note of a bird or hum of an insect fell upon the ear, and one went back in imagination to the wonderful sight which must have been witnessed, when the vast multitude of the Israelites covered the shore after escaping from the pursuing host who were engulphed in the terrible waters of the Red Sea. Our tents were pitched between two of the palm groves surrounding the wells, and we enjoyed to the full the novel sensations which all travellers experience at the commencement of their strange life of desert freedom, absolutely untrammelled by the restrictions of civilisation. The water of the wells is hot and brackish to the taste; there is nothing inviting about it.

After dinner—a most luxurious meal, by the way, which did credit to our good-natured Nubian cook, by name Mersal, consisting of soup, two or three excellent *entrées*, fowls, sweets, and a dessert of seven or eight dishes—we took a stroll to enjoy the delicious soft air of the desert. The whole scene was a picture, familiar indeed to old travellers, but inex-

pressibly charming to me in its novelty. The moon had risen and bathed the silent desert in its ghostly effulgence; the Arabs crouched round their smouldering fires, their patient camels kneeling by their sides; our tent gleaming white in the night air, looked so invitingly cozy and warm as you saw through the open canvas door; the whispering palm groves, faintly stirred by the gentle breeze; the calm purple sea, just seen in the dim distance; and the ineffably sacred associations which were bound up with the spot—all combined to lead one into a train of reverent contemplation. To one who, like myself, had lived much in the whirl of a great city, surrounded with flaring gas-lights, screeching railways, and the roar of ceaseless traffic, this deathlike stillness seemed doubly profound and delightful.

Next morning we rose soon after six o'clock, and in half an hour were seated at a capital breakfast, garnished with tea, coffee, hot toast and butter, Dundee marmalade, and other luxuries. Our first night in the tent had proved a very comfortable one, and the novelty of occupying the same sleeping apartment with two other men very soon wears off. We had each a handy iron bedstead which packed up into wonderfully small compass, and a sort of double quilt did duty for both blankets and sheets. Then three tin ewers and basins stood all ready at the tent door for our morning ablutions, though we were undoubtedly obliged to dispense with the Englishman's special luxury of a 'tub.'

While my companions walked on ahead, I enjoyed a quiet pipe of mild Turkish tobacco, and watched the rapid manner

in which the Arabs struck the tents, stowed away our baggage, bedsteads, canteen, cooking apparatus, chairs and tables. It was by no means warm, as the desert air is biting enough until the sun has arisen in his strength; but a rapid walk beside the camels soon put heat into me. By ten o'clock it grew very warm, and I found great relief from my blue glasses, which mitigated the effect of the glare.

The scenery through which we passed was one unvarying hard sandy plain, with small stones scattered about, and occasionally tufts of a small prickly shrub of the cactus order, and a few blades of coarse grass. Our path lay about half a mile from the shore, and our left hand was bounded by a low range of mountains. About mid-day we stopped for lunch at a solitary acacia tree, that threw the faintest possible shade over the sand; and spreading our carpets over the ground, with a roll of rugs and coats for a pillow, we lay at ease and discussed the good things which our ever careful Achmet had provided for our use. Meanwhile our baggage animals slowly stalked on, thus enabling them to get the requisite distance ahead, so as to unload and have the tents all in order by our arrival at dinner-time. The Arabs will only go a certain distance each day, generally about eight hours, and every stopping-place is well known. Consequently the traveller need not worry himself with unnecessarily early starts, for this will only cause him to arrive at the tents sooner at nights.

Wady Sŭdr was our resting-place this evening—a bare flat part of the desert, with no special feature by which to describe

it. Again our white tent gave a temporary aspect of home comforts to the barren desert, and the lantern hanging from the entrance shed a kindly gleam of light into the chill air. Once more I wandered along the trackless desert with the cold glittering stars overhead and the dusky mysterious mountain ranges a little way off, and fully realised that I was far from home, and about to seek still more distant scenes of stern desolation and solitude. At such a moment the friends and familiar faces of 'auld lang syne' come vividly up to remembrance, former scenes of revelry and rejoicing contrast strangely with the intense repose of the present moment, and the future seems tinged with an indefinable forecast of sadness.

A cold windy morning succeeded, and we were wakened before dawn by our trusty dragoman, who warned us that we had a long day's journey before us. Most unwillingly did I leave the pleasant warmth of my iron couch, and immersed my face in the excessively cold water. By half-past six, however, we were ready to start; but there was a regular fight between two of the Arabs as to the overloading of a camel, accompanied by furious cries and gesticulations, all about nothing. We had our first shower of rain to-day, since leaving Alexandria; quite a novelty it was, but it proved of brief duration, and we got hardly another drop of moisture until we reached Jerusalem. After luncheon we moved on through more undulating ground, diversified with high ridges of sand and masses of rock, and we were continually ascending and leaving the sea. As we approached the well of Ain

Hawarah, the supposed fountain of Marah, where Moses sweetened the bitter waters, the scenery grew much more interesting; rocky hills and deep wadys giving variety to the landscape. We pitched our tents near the fountain with its single round palm-tree, shaped like a huge circular bush, no stem being visible. This night the moon shone with great splendour, making the sandy desert all around look like untrodden snow; the hills, rocks, and tents standing out clearly defined in the brilliant light, and the night wind sweeping up the wadys with long-drawn wailing sound.

Day succeeds day in these calm solitudes with few events to chequer their even monotony, and the traveller thinks nothing about the grave events which may, hour by hour, be enacting in unquiet Europe. He cares not for newspapers, politics, or the daily share list. Indifferent to him are the fluctuations of consols, railways, or foreign stocks—he heeds them not; the idea of such everyday realities is distasteful to him. For the time being he rolls away the accumulated load of cares and worries of a domestic or business nature, rejoicing in his desert freedom and immunity from letters and telegrams. He looks around and sees the face of nature unchanged; even as it was 6,000 years ago, so is it now. No sound of railway-engine will ever wake the slumbering echoes of this secluded valley, no telegraph-posts will ever find holding-ground in these shifting sands; a solitude it will remain till time is no more. Better that it should be so; the world is going too fast in these days of electric excitement, and has few spots remote from the haunts of men.

And now we reach Wady Ghŭrundel, the Elim of the Bible, where the Israelites encamped, and where are several pools of water and a number of palm and tamarisk-trees. The rocks now assume bold forms, and the path still ascends considerably. To the right of this is a hill called 'Pharaoh's Bath,' with a hot spring near its base, and afar off we got our first view of the grand form of Mount Serbâl. Our path lay by Wady Useit, and all around us were precipitous ridges of rock. The day was hot, though a cool wind was blowing; and here, for the first time, we encountered some fellow travellers in the shape of a number of Russian pilgrims, proceeding from Mount Sinai to Suez; men and women, all walking on foot; rough, bearded, long-haired specimens of the Russian peasant. They took little notice of us; indeed, such was the rule with any pilgrims or travellers whom we encountered in our wanderings.

We traversed steadily along the broad dried-up water-courses, from whose steep banks the cliffs rose up perpendicularly to a great height, until we were fairly hemmed in between the precipitous sides of a long winding valley. In many places the strata of the rocks were very distinctly marked, and caves appeared in the clefts at intervals. It was nearly dark when we arrived at our tents in Wady Taiyibeh, beside some palm-trees and a pool of water, while around us uprose precipitous rocks; one especially grand mountain-side directly facing us, with well-defined strata of red and black running across its rugged surface. A more secluded spot could not well be imagined, the absolute life-

lessness being profoundly striking. The following day we were marching along the same dry bed of a torrent, but the cliffs now assumed a yellow tinge, while a stray palm-tree or two lent occasional verdure to the scene. At last the beautiful dark purple sea again came into view, its waves breaking crisply on the shell-strewn shore; and after the dreary expanse of shingly sand we had been wearily traversing, the briny freshness of the deep was doubly invigorating. A noble view also was gained of Mount Serbâl on one side, and the great mountain ranges of Africa on the opposite coast.

Taking advantage of a sheltered cove, which gave some slight shade from the sun's oppressive heat, we indulged in the luxury of a bathe, which was all the more acceptable from our recently enforced abstinence from such ablutions. At this part of the shore the cliffs advance so close to the sea, that the camels have to wade right through the tide, and some demur was made to this proceeding by one or two of them. After this we emerged upon the extensive plain of Murkhâh, which is bounded by the dark blue sea on one side, and on the other by lofty granite mountains, rich with an infinite variety colouring. Immense quantities of smoothly rounded boulders of many varieties of rocks cover the plain, and a small prickly shrub, of which the camels seem fond, grows in abundance. We found it very weary work crossing this plain, and the mountains positively seemed to recede as we advanced towards them. At last, after two hours march, we discovered an opening, formed by a dried-up torrent, which presently led to the strange Wady Shellâl, an extraordinary valley,

completely shut in by range after range of mountains, characterised by marvellous colouring and rugged forms. Some of them are white limestone, with sharp peaks and numerous seams streaking their sides; others are dark and covered with *débris*, like great masses of earth thrown up from a quarry, while right in our front rose up an apparently impassable barrier of a mountain, whose base was one mass of green rock; further up the colour was dark grey, and then all beyond was of red granite tint. The evening sun striking upon the shattered pinnacles of rocks, and throwing into deep shade the dark recesses and clefts of the mountain, heightened the effect, and invested the whole scene with an unreal and mysterious character.

From this we passed up a desolate ravine with a few scattered trees in it, and began to ascend continuously till we reached our camping-ground at the entrance of Wady Bâderah. Our tents were pitched in a sort of vast sloping natural amphitheatre, surrounded by great mountains of every variety of outline and colour. Next day was Sunday, so we did not travel on that day—a resolution to which we adhered throughout our tour, and which our Arab escort duly appreciated. One of us read the Morning Service of the Church of England, and its noble prayers came home to our hearts with double force, surrounded as we were by the sublime scenery and associations of the land through which the Almighty led His chosen people, and amidst whose tremendous defiles they were guided by that wondrous column of fire. Being rather fatigued, we passed most of the day,

which was very hot, in the tent, and only strolled out in the afternoon for a walk before dinner. Turning our steps towards the vast green mountain at the foot of the sloping plain where our tents were placed, we were beguiled onwards by the remarkable character of the rocks until we reached a truly wonderful gorge, which seems to have escaped the observation of most travellers. We had been following the dry water-course, hemmed in on either side by great masses of jagged rock, till it suddenly took a leap over a shelving cliff, all furrowed and hollowed out into grooves by the winter torrent. Clambering down this, we found ourselves in a narrow chasm, with the most wonderful detached masses of rock and gigantic boulders strewn about, all of which had fallen from the terrific precipices overhanging the bed of the stream. They were of every variety of size and colour, some granite, some sandstone, some porphyry, others basalt; and the whole appearance of the place was as if some tremendous convulsion of the earth had violently rent the solid cliffs asunder. Some of the immense detached blocks were of vast bulk; and the dreadful stillness brooding over the narrow gorge, and the savage grandeur of the overhanging crags—the advancing twilight increasing the weird aspect of the scene—all combined to overawe the beholder. We observed, on one or two of the larger masses of rocks, some inscriptions rudely carved, resembling the Sinaitic writings which we afterwards met with in Wady Mokatteb.

Following this wild valley for more than half a mile, we found that it grew wider and emerged probably upon the

Wady Shellâl, so we reluctantly retraced our steps as the faint yellow rays of the sun just faintly tipped with gold the savage mountain-tops. We were greatly struck with the sublime character of this gorge, and would fain have further explored it, but time did not permit, as on the morrow we again set our faces towards Mount Sinai. The mountains of this remarkable part of the peninsula have, somehow, not the solid look that one would expect; many of them seem as if they were vast heaps of earth thrown up by the cyclopean excavators of some gigantic quarry. But as we passed up the steep Nukb Baderah, and traversed the great wady of the same name, we entered upon the region of red granite. One noble mountain is seen closing in the wady for a long way off, by name Jebel Gineh. Here we met two adventurous Frenchmen, dressed with all the attention to effect that characterises their nation, and armed with long guns, pistols, and other implements, who we understood had been occupied all winter in searching for turquoises in this dreary neighbourhood. They were attended by various Arabs and their camels, on one of which was slung a heavy-looking box bound with iron, which, doubtless, contained the precious stones they were conveying to Cairo. To add to the singular effect of this peculiar cavalcade, they carried the French flag, and we made our politest bow in passing so distinguished a party.

Now we reached the Wady Mokatteb, the strange 'Written Valley,' where are seen those mysterious inscriptions which have puzzled so many wise heads to decipher. It is very

broad in most places, and is covered with great boulders as well as seamed by numerous water-courses. Ranges of red granite mountains bound it on both sides, rising to a considerable height. The heat was great in this extensive valley, which has a gentle descent for almost the whole way till it joins the Wady Feiran. The inscriptions are traced with some sharp instrument on the faces of detached blocks of sandstone which have fallen from the cliffs above, and are generally in two lines of curious characters, with some crosses and rudely-drawn figures of animals like camels and dogs. They are occasionally on the face of the cliffs themselves, and rather high up. Burckhardt, Niebuhr, Lepsius, Professor Beer and others, have given various opinions as to their origin, and Dean Stanley considers that they were done by Christian pilgrims.

We now entered upon the famous Wady Feiran, the 'paradise of the Bedawin,' which is broad and flat, covered with quantities of scattered stones with tufts of grass and shrubs between. Our route now lay amidst truly grand scenery; on both sides immense lofty jagged granite mountains rose up from the broad water-course along which we toiled. Here again I was more than ever struck by the intense silence brooding around, the absolute lifelessness of rocks and valley; not an insect dancing in the hot air, no bird skimming along the mountain side, no floweret scenting the gale with its modest fragrance, no bleating of sheep or cry of wild animal to wake the echoes slumbering in eternal repose. One winding valley succeeds another—dead, still,

and deserted, vast amphitheatres of sun-bleached rocks, apparently without any outlet—until suddenly a narrow cleft appears which leads to a similar valley of death and desolation. Each separate valley might almost be conceived to have once been a lake, so regularly rounded are their configurations, so steep their rocky sides, with the red ramparts frowning down upon the level space below. The finest of all was the one that our tents were pitched in, whose precipitous sides towered up for well-nigh 2,000 feet; and in the distance the huge form of majestic Mount Serbâl, with its five sharp peaks, rose up in solitary grandeur. The last rays of the rapidly sinking sun crimsoned its serrated brow with a strangely beautiful effect; and later on, when the moonbeams fell upon the precipices surrounding our tent, while as yet the pale orb itself was invisible, the unearthly and mysterious loveliness of the scene was difficult to describe.

Quitting our camping-ground on the following morning at half-past seven, we marched on for about three hours through the beautiful Wady Feiran, passing a ruined Arab village in the midst of green feathery palm-trees, which looked deliciously inviting and verdant after the scorching scenery through which our path had lain for so many days. A mile further on we came to the ruined village of Feiran, the site of an early ecclesiastical city, where once lived a Christian bishop surrounded by a goodly population of devoted adherents, attracted to these remote regions by the sacred associations of the peninsula. Here the thirsty traveller

is delighted to observe a lovely clear crystal streamlet meandering along the palm and tamarisk-girt valley, and the entire look of the spot is refreshing and picturesque. We now rested for awhile and prepared for our great effort —the ascent of Mount Serbâl. This is the usual place from which the attempt is made; and, as it involves say nine or ten hours hard work, it is well to make due preparation.

We were very soon visited by some of the Arabs from the village with eggs and dates for sale, and our dragoman selected two guides to conduct us to the summit of the mountain. It was a fearfully hot day, as usual not a cloud in the sky, and we ought properly to have set off hours before. However, we started about ten o'clock with our guides, taking our route up the Wady Aleiyât, a steep valley filled with great boulders detached by the storms of centuries from the mountain. We were several times obliged to stop and rest on account of the increasing oppressiveness of the air, so that it took us more than two hours to reach the foot of the immense central perpendicular mass of the mountain. This presents a seemingly impassable barrier to further progress, for the gigantic red granite cliffs tower up so precipitously as to defy the presumptuous attempt to scale their dizzy heights. The individual peaks of the mountain are separated by deep ravines full of vast blocks of granite; and up the central one, called Abu Hamd, we slowly toiled for more than three hours. We had to use our hands quite as much as our feet in dragging ourselves up the enormous masses of fallen rock, and there was no shelter to be got

from the scorching sunshine which beat fiercely upon our heads. Upon looking up, we still saw the awful copper-coloured smooth walls of granite seemingly reaching up to the opal sky, and closing in the view on both sides. Then occasionally we would dislodge a stone from its place, and it would thunder down the dizzy heights up which we had been struggling till it found a resting-place in the ravine far below. To add to the utter sterility of the spot, no blade of verdure was visible, only in one or two places we saw a wild fig-tree with difficulty retaining a foothold amid the barren rocks.

At last, however, we did reach the top of the ravine, in a very exhausted condition, and to our delight found a very little rain-water in the hollow of a rock, from which we drank eagerly. But here again we were confronted by a tremendous mass of perpendicular smooth rock, forming the shoulder and summit of the mountain. There is no track over the slippery round masses of granite, and it is exceedingly difficult to keep your feet; while a false step would precipitate the traveller down the awful depths into some unknown abyss. By this time we were nearly exhausted, and still the summit was unattained. At last we gained the narrow ledge which surrounds the huge circular mass of rock forming the extreme peak of the mountain, and succeeded in clambering on to the highest pinnacle of all, at an elevation of 6,734 feet above the surface of the sea. On a narrow shelf of rock near the actual summit may be seen the remains of an ancient lighthouse, which gives its name to the loftiest peak of Serbâl,

one of a series of beacon-fires whose lurid flames flashed from this dizzy altitude on the adjoining coast.

What a glorious view now burst upon our astonished gaze! We looked over the whole peninsula of Sinai, with its sublime associations and awe-inspiring natural features. From Suez at one end of the Red Sea, to the far-off mountains near the Gulf of Akabah, the mighty map lay unrolled at our feet. We surveyed the entire route of the vast host of Israel along the yellow sandy plain, and narrow devious valley, until they rested in the broad open space before the mountain, where God Himself was to be revealed amidst thunderings, smoke, and fire. The mysterious column of fire lighted up with its unearthly lustre these sombre defiles, where the overhanging cliffs threatened to topple down upon that great throng, whose tread shook the solid earth at their base. Then the great, smooth, sandy plain of Kâa was seen extending from the foot of Mount Serbâl all along the sea shore, far away to the dusky village of Tor.

The entire length of the Gulf of Suez was before us: a calm, waveless sheet of purple sea, resting motionless in the sultry atmosphere, its surface undisturbed by the keel of a single vessel. As it was nearing four o'clock, the sun was fast declining to the African range of blue mountains, and cast a lovely rich yellow glow from shore to shore, across the molten sea of silver thus bridged over with a broad golden arch. Casting one's glance inland, the peninsula was bathed in an exquisite rosy hue, the valleys and mountains softly veiled in blue mist, forming a magic harmony of colouring

which can only be seen when the sun is sinking towards the horizon. Northwards the face of the country slopes away into the wilderness of Tih, a confused mass of low hills and shallow wadys of an uniform yellowish colour; while turning to the chief scene of all, the grand form of the sacred mountain itself, a noble range of magnificent peaks, gilded with glory by the setting sun, bounded the eastern horizon.

We seemed lifted up far above the face of that lone, deserted land. Mountains, themselves of huge bulk, lay scattered like great boulders of stone on the surface of the peninsula. Winding valleys, along whose scorching sands we had for days been painfully toiling, looked like white streaks amidst the sea of rocks. The world of civilisation seemed removed for ever from our ken; we gazed around on nothing but barrenness and desolation. In our immediate vicinity the objects that met our eyes were sufficiently grand. The rugged peaks of the great mountain on whose iron brow the storms and burning suns of ages had beaten in vain, rose up in all directions around us. An awful silence pervaded these tremendous rocks; the human mind felt utterly humbled and subdued in the presence of such sublime features of nature. The brain grew dizzy as one tried to peer down the fearful abyss environing the summits. Words were vain to express the feelings of the moment; the very presence of man seemed an anomaly in this majestic solitude.

Still richer grew the marvellous pink tints overspreading the far-off granite rocks and misty valleys as the sun now rapidly neared the horizon. The delicate haze grew more ethereal,

and the quivering atmosphere seemed to induce in us an increasing langour and indisposition to move away from our exalted station. The thought, too, that in a few fleeting moments this matchless panorama would be lost to our gaze, was very saddening, for we knew well that we should never look on it again. A feeling of melancholy seemed to hang over our small party; the very Arab guides lay motionless under the rock. But it was indeed time that we should descend, for we had a very long and weary way to go ere we could possibly reach our tents, so we were reluctantly forced to commence our return. There is a small heap of stones on the highest point of the rock, and among them I discovered a bottle, which, though open at the top, contained a number of small slips of paper, apparently not at all injured by the weather, on which were written the names of travellers who had reached the top. In some years there seemed to have been no visitors to this sublime mountain, and judging from the small number of recorded ascents, comparatively few of those who visited Mount Sinai have climbed its majestic rival. We carefully inserted our illustrious names amongst the others, and replaced the bottle in its position. There was also another small bottle, which had been left by a party from one of Her Majesty's ships of war, who seemed to have visited the summit on January 21, 1872, and left certain observations as to temperature and weather for the benefit of their successors.

The descent was much more rapidly effected than the ascent; still, by the time we got to the bottom of the terrific

ravine, it was getting dark. From this point we knew we had at least two good hours' walk, and I, for one, was completely knocked up; my soles were almost worn off my boots with clambering over the hard granite rocks, and I would fain have rested every ten minutes. To increase our difficulties, the two Arabs deliberately went out of their way, and certainly took us considerably out of the track which we traversed in the morning. Of course we could not hold any conversation with them, and we had nothing for it but to follow blindly where they chose to lead. At last I fairly lost my temper, and indulged my feelings in exclamations of anger and impotent abuse which, as may be supposed, the Arabs received with equanimity. We stumbled over prostrate rocks, and, as it was now quite dark, every footstep was taken in doubt of where we might be landed, for we were on the verge of a pretty steep valley. At last, our hearts were cheered by seeing lights in the distance. Our faithful dragoman, having become alarmed, had sent out men with lanterns in quest of us. When we reached the tent it was about eight o'clock; and throwing ourselves on our iron beds, we soon forgot our fatigues in a short period of repose preceding our well-earned repast.

Next morning we felt very tired, and did not start till half-past eight. Enjoyed the luxury of a delightful bath in the clear crystal stream that runs through the valley, with its groups of palm and tamarisk trees, and circling granite hills on all sides. The valley winds along for more than a mile full of palms, and also a great many manna trees. Here the

Bedawin come when the dates are ripe to gather the fruit, for each man has his special garden of some thirty or forty trees surrounded with fences of dried palm branches. We were sorry to leave this beautiful valley with its refreshing verdure, so grateful to the eye after the burnt rocks and sand of the desert. As we left the Wady Feiran and entered the Wady esh-Sheikh we got a fine view of Mount Serbâl, and could hardly believe that we had only yesterday stood upon its dizzy summit. The outline of the mountain, as it grew more misty and enveloped in shade, reminded me greatly of the form of the Cuchullin hills in Skye, above Loch Scavaig. At five o'clock we rested for the night in a large open plain, with a range of lofty mountains to the west, which caught the red rays of the setting sun till they shone like burnished gold.

On the following day we were off at half-past seven, the dromedaries only accompanying us, as the camels with the heavy baggage had to make the detour of the Wady Sheikh, while we took the shorter but very precipitous Nukb Hawy, or 'Pass of the Winds.' This we reached about eleven o'clock, after descending from an elevated ridge of rock which we had to cross. From this point the view of the whole range of lofty granite mountains surrounding Sinai is grand in the extreme, their perpendicular copper-coloured peaks seeming almost to reach the sky. The 'Pass of the Winds' is very steep, presenting terrible difficulties to the animals who toiled painfully up the great masses of broken rock which cover the path. The scenery here reminded me of Glencoe

in its wildest parts, only that instead of the covering of grass and heather, which thinly clothes the rocks in the Scottish glen, there was nothing save the bare granite cliffs.

Our expectations were now raised to the utmost pitch, for as soon as we reached the top of the pass we knew that Mount Sinai would be visible. At last we gazed upon its awful form, rising majestically up from the great plain of Râhah, which extends in a gentle slope for more than two miles from the pass to the mountain. It is difficult to describe the varied emotions which agitate one at such a moment, the sublime associations of the spot are of so overpowering a nature. The mountain rises up in sheer precipices from the plain, and seems to stand isolated from the surrounding heights. This is the most imposing point of view it presents; for, as you come nearer to it, the base does certainly slope upwards, not in the sheer abruptness which one would at first imagine. At a distance of perhaps three or four hundred feet from the base the rocks rise up in precipitous smooth red masses, ultimately breaking into several peaks at the top. The plain of Râhah is triangular in shape, and of ample size to contain even the vast host of the Israelites, who probably entered it from the Wady Sheikh which emerges on to the plain. For some time, as we rode across the bare hot plain, we had the convent of Mount Sinai in view. It stands in a valley opening out to the plain with the mountain on one side, and on the other a lofty range of rocky precipices. It is an extensive quadrangular pile of buildings, surrounded by high walls of granite defended by

60373

a few small towers. But what specially struck us was the exquisite beauty of the almond, peach, and apple-trees, in full blossom, which, in this awfully barren region of adamantine rock, looked so unreal and out of place. The prospect, too, of some days repose after our sojourn in the desert, was by no means displeasing, especially as our bread was all finished, and we could not get any more except at the convent. As we approached its walls, the monks, who had doubtless seen our party for some time, let down a small basket attached to a rope, in which we deposited our letter of introduction. This was quickly hoisted up for inspection, and the result was satisfactory, for in a few minutes a large gate leading into the garden was thrown open, and this again conducted to a small postern-door in the convent walls, by means of which we gained admission to the main building.

CHAPTER V.

THE SACRED MOUNTAIN AND ITS CONVENT.

It was on February 29 that we were received within the hospitable walls of this ancient convent, which from the time of its founding, A.D. 527, by the Emperor Justinian, has continued till the present day to afford an asylum for those pilgrims who have come to visit the sublime valleys of Mount Sinai. The monk who admitted us spoke Italian, and presently conducted us to the Superior—a stout, contented-looking ecclesiastic, apparently about sixty years old—who appreciated a glass of our marsala, accompanied by a cheroot. Refreshments were presently set before us, consisting of capital brown bread, which we greatly enjoyed, dates, and a sort of liqueur, made from date-stones, which was by no means agreeable to our palate. Our rugs, baggage, canteen and other articles, were brought up by the Arabs, and our dragoman bustled about and gave his orders as if he perfectly knew the ways of the place. Some travellers prefer to remain in their tents outside the convent walls; surely a great mistake, when a whole range of bedrooms is at their disposal, besides the luxuries of tables, chairs, clean beds, and glass

windows. The tents will be found exceedingly cold in these high latitudes, and the sensation of space to move about in is a relief, after the very circumscribed limits of a canvas home. We were also allowed to do just as we liked, to roam at will over any part of the convent, no one asking any questions, or taking much notice of us; and, in the heat of the day, it was pleasant to be able to stretch ourselves on the stuffed divans of our bedrooms, and enjoy an undisturbed *siesta*.

The interior of the convent is of the most irregular form, and the architecture of the rudest description. Long corridors, paved courts and passages, the walls pierced with numerous small square windows, extend, in defiance of any set plan, throughout the interior space. Wooden staircases and galleries conduct to a series of bedrooms, dining halls, and kitchens, for the special use of strangers. From these rooms you can gain access to the flat paved summit of the battlements, from which a fine view is obtained over the plain of Râhah and the noble mountain ranges bounding it on all sides. It is a considerable height from this down to the valley below, where are generally congregated some Bedawin women and children waiting for the supplies of food which are daily furnished to them by the charitable monks. There are about a dozen small courtyards within the walls, some of them cultivated as gardens, and a few cypresses and vines grow here. Ranges of cells occupy the east and north sides, the upper ones solely being tenanted by the monks, while the lower ones are converted into store-houses, which are vaulted

and built of granite in a very solid fashion. The bakehouse and distillery for manufacturing their date-brandy are kept up in good order. Three different sorts of bread are made, the inferior quality being for the Arabs. The other workshops are occupied by the different brethren, who act as cooks, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, smiths, masons, and other artificers.

There are twenty-seven different chapels within the walls for the various Christian denominations, which are now never used, though incense is kept burning in them. Then there is also a mosque with a minaret, said to have been erected previous to the fourteenth century, which is kept in indifferent order by the Arabs under protection of the convent, but travellers are not encouraged to visit it. The principal building in the convent is the church, dedicated to the Transfiguration, though its outward aspect is anything but imposing. The interior likewise is disappointing, for the fine granite columns of Byzantine architecture, which separate the nave and aisles, have been covered with whitewash, the pictures on the walls are wretchedly bad, and the tesselated marble floor is dirty and unswept. Innumerable lamps of all sizes, among them some rather elegant silver ones, hang from the roof, and old carved stalls for the brethren are ranged along the walls. Service was going on the first time I visited the chapel, but very few of the brethren attended on the occasion, and the officiating monk mumbled over the prayers in a rapid monotone, certainly as far removed from a devotional exercise as anything pretending to be a religious ceremony which it was

ever my lot to witness. The altar-screen is profusely hung with hard, angular-looking daubs of pictures, and an immense crucifix rises above the altar till it nearly touches the roof. The chancel is the part of the church which is chiefly interesting, for on the ceiling are some very ancient mosaics. The lamps and candles have blackened the designs and rich gilding, but the figures highest up are two representations of Moses, on his knees before the burning bush, and also standing to receive the tables of the law. Below this are two medallions of Justinian and his consort Theodora, and then comes the representation of the Transfiguration. Christ is in the centre, having Moses and Elias on either side, while the three apostles, dazzled by the celestial light, are seen on the ground below. A Greek inscription runs along the foot of the picture, narrating that the work was executed by the most holy priest and prior Longinus, for the salvation of those who contributed to it by their donations.

Behind the altar are preserved the relics of St. Catherine of Alexandria, whose body was miraculously, so the credulous are given to understand, conveyed by angels, A.D. 307, to the summit of the mountain that now bears her name. The skeleton of her hand, covered with rings and jewels, is all that the visitor can now see, and the monks make great parade of prayers, incense burning, and other ceremonies while removing the withered relic of the saint from the coffin. Here also are seen two splendid silver sarcophagi, one sent by the Empress Catherine of Russia, richly gilt and sculptured, and the lid decorated with a full-length recum-

bent figure of the Imperial donor herself. This seems to have been intended to receive the august remains of the empress; but they never came, so the sarcophagus stands empty. The other is quite new, having been sent not long ago by the present Emperor of Russia, and is of solid silver, richly chased and adorned. An exquisite representation of a female head and shoulders is painted on the lid, the expression of the face most mournful and delicate, the eyes closed in the sleep of death, and the hands crossed on the breast. But what surprised us most were the very costly gems which studded the gilt scroll-work round the picture, and which the monk, who showed us this splendid offering of the emperor's, assured us were real stones. Diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, and other precious stones, were profusely studded on the gilded bordering, one of the emeralds adorning the breast being nearly an inch and a half square, and must be of immense value. Now, considering the very great temptations to abstract the real stones and substitute fictitious gems, and the facility with which this little exchange could be effected by some of the wild hangers-on of the convent, it seems a somewhat dangerous prize to place within their grasp.

Near this is the chapel of the Burning Bush, richly decorated and hung with silver lamps, the pavement covered with carpets. You are obliged to take off your shoes on entering this spot, which the monks deem very sacred ground. We then proceeded to the library, a small room with rude wooden shelves ranged round it, containing nearly

1,500 volumes of no great value, though there are some Arabic and Greek manuscripts of interest, consisting, according to Burckhardt, of books of prayer, copies of the Gospels, lives of saints, liturgies, &c. Here the Russian *savant* Tischendorf discovered and carried off to St. Petersburg the famous *Codex Sinaiticus*, the oldest known copy of the New Testament. The monks are fain to put up with a splendidly got-up facsimile of the precious manuscript, which we saw, but they evidently do not pay much heed to the literary treasures in their custody.

Those who are curious in such matters will like to visit the charnel-house, which contains the remains of the brethren who die in these remote solitudes. It is situated in the midst of their beautiful garden, surrounded with sweet-scented aloes and almond trees, and the more appropriate sombre cypress. Here are ranged, after the manner of the similar chamber below the Capuchin Church at Rome, the bones of the dead monks, as Bartlett says, 'in ghastly symmetry, from the remains of him who died yesterday and still lived in the memory of his fellow-monks, to him whose forgotten remains, with their history, are written only in the book of Omniscience.' Here might Hamlet well moralise—'Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick; to this favour she must come.'

The garden is on the north side of the convent, and is pretty extensive already; still the monks were busy, while we were there, in taking in an additional portion of ground. It is formed in terraces, laboriously built up with stone walls

to keep the soil in its place, and is entirely surrounded by high walls. This is not always, however, a sufficient protection from the plundering Arabs, who sometimes carry off the fruit, though they generally leave the vegetables. A still worse enemy than the Bedawin are the flights of locusts, which sometimes consume the entire produce of the year. There are some venerable old olive, almond and cypress trees, besides orange, lemon, mulberry, apricot, apple, pear and peach trees, while quantities of onions, lettuces, cabbages, cucumbers, beans and other useful vegetables, testify to the care bestowed on their cultivation by the monks whose special duty this is. A curious sight it was to see the silent, grave brethren, with their dark brown robes fastened by a cord round the waist, working away with spade or trowel. We enjoyed strolling in the garden, it was so shady and cool compared with the blazing valley beyond, and the delicious fragrance of almond and orange blossoms filled the air. Constant irrigation is needed to keep the soil in order in this scorching climate, and there are one or two wells for this purpose in the garden.

The monks, upon the whole, seemed to have an easy time of it. There are at present under fifty of them, though in the fourteenth century the convent contained an archbishop and 400 monks. The discipline is, however, pretty severe, as they must attend mass twice in the day and twice in the night, and no flesh or wine is allowed all the year round. Their ordinary food is bread, boiled vegetables and fruit, with cheese occasionally. But they indulge habitually in

their date-brandy, and this is even permitted to them during their fasts, and they are allowed the free use of tobacco. Most of them are Greeks, with a few Italians and Russians, and they usually belong to the lower ranks of society. They know little of Arabic or any modern languages. As a rule, the monks do not remain in the convent above four or five years, though a few of them do live there all their lives, and their bones repose in the garden they used to tend. They are very glad to receive travellers, and it is customary to make an adequate recompense, through the dragoman, for the supplies provided to the party. A book is kept in the Superior's room, in which are recorded the names of travellers who have visited the convent. Amongst them I noticed those of Buckle, the historian, and his friend Mr. Glennie; also the junior member for Edinburgh, who, with his wife and daughters, had remained some days in the convent. There did not seem to be above three or four parties every year, though it is possible that the names of those who remain outside the walls in their tents are not recorded.

Previous to the third century of the Christian era, the rugged fastnesses of Mount Sinai had become the resort of the early Christians, where, by degrees, small communities established themselves, and Feirân was the site of an episcopal see, and of a city, as the ruins remaining to this day testify. Before the close of the tenth century Sinai had been erected into a bishopric under the Patriarch of Jerusalem. There was supposed to be about this period nearly six thousand inmates of the various monasteries and cells in the vicinity

of Serbâl and Sinai, who, from the spread of Islamism among the wandering tribes, were exposed to much danger. During last century regular caravans of pilgrims, so Burckhardt states, used to visit the convent from Cairo and even Jerusalem, as he saw a document preserved by the monks which narrated that one day 800 Armenians arrived from the latter city, and, another time, 500 Copts from Cairo. Few pilgrims now run the risks of a long journey across the Desert to visit the sacred mountain, and were it not for the annually increasing throng of British and American tourists, who are attracted thither by the sublime associations and scenery of the Sinaitic peninsula, the worthy monks would have little communication with the outer world.

Accompanied by a Greek monk and two Arabs we set off, about 7.30 A.M. on March 2, to visit the summit of Mount Sinai. Most travellers who have described the ascent seem to have started at the back of the convent, and toiled up a steep zigzag pathway till they reached the small chapel erected to the Virgin; but we took quite a different road. Following the course of the valley is an excellent track, quite practicable for camels, which was constructed by Abbas Pasha, and you can ride up to the very base of the precipitous cliffs which form the extreme ridge of the mountain. We were about one hour and a half in gaining this point, and then, leaving our camels, we climbed the rest of the ascent on foot. A rough staircase has been made by laying large stones at intervals upon one another, and, after Mount Serbâl, the ascent seemed child's play. The

upper part of the summit is a series of tremendous masses and splintered blocks of granite, utterly destitute of any herbage; and we came upon a mass of ice, apparently a spring that had frozen during the intense cold of the night. We gained the summit about 9.45 A.M., and sat down leisurely to examine the view, which, though fine, is not to be compared with that from Serbâl. Various estimates of the height of the mountain, Jebel Mûsa as it is called by the Arabs, have been given. Murray's 'Handbook' for 1868, generally a very correct authority, gives it as 7,100 feet above the sea and 2,000 feet above the convent; while Wellsted, who made the ascent in 1833, writes that it 'has been erroneously estimated at 7,200 feet above the convent, but we ascertained its altitude from two points within the sea of Akabah, one giving 7,530 feet and the other 7,480 feet above the level of the sea; 2,500 feet is its greatest elevation above the convent.' Burckhardt and Laborde are silent upon the point, but the most recent estimate puts it at 7,375 feet above the sea.

The summit is somewhat flat, of an oblong shape, and is large enough to give space for two small buildings, one a chapel and the other a mosque. The church is strongly built of granite, and seems to have long been in a ruinous condition; but in 1864 it was rebuilt, and is whitewashed within and partially plastered without. A very strong door, of which our guide carried the key, admits to the interior, which is adorned with a few rude decorations. The remains of a much older and more solid building can be traced near the chapel, and on the granite rocks all around are seen the

names of travellers who have visited the spot. How they managed to engrave them was a mystery to me, for I tried in vain to affix mine in the adamantine rock. I did, however, after some labour, succeed in breaking off a small portion of the extreme peak of the mountain, which I now have the satisfaction of showing to my friends. A few paces off there are the ruins of a Mahommedan mosque, held in veneration by the Bedawin, who visit the summit on certain of their feast days, and sacrifice a sheep in honour of Moses. We were fortunate, both on this occasion and when we ascended Mount Serbâl, in having a perfectly cloudless sky, for many travellers have found the summit of Sinai enveloped in mist. In the immediate vicinity of the mountain is a vast sea of peaks, and the description of Sir F. Henniker is as correct as it is graphic: 'It would seem as if Arabia Petræa had once been an ocean of lava, and that while its waves were literally running mountains high, it was commanded suddenly to stand still.' A large portion of the Gulf of Akabah is visible, with the far distant island of Tiran rising out of its calm blue waters, and the noble range of Arabian mountains, ninety miles distant, bounds the horizon. The Gulf of Suez is nearly hidden from view by the stupendous bulk of Mount St. Catherine, whose sharp conical peak glitters in lone magnificence in the morning sun rays. Serbâl, too, is dimly seen far away, rising above the range of serrated mountains which cluster round the Wady Feirân, and very striking is the aspect of the wilderness of jagged rocks in the immediate vicinity of the convent of St. Catherine. Life is nowhere to

be seen, either in the shape of man, animals, birds, or trees; the aspect of the landscape is that of a land where God has forgotten to be gracious. Neither the torrents of winter nor the fervid heat of summer avail to clothe these awful crags with refreshing verdure; an eternal desolation now marks the sublime region where once the Almighty conversed with man. The seasons come and go, and no smiling harvest or mantle of emerald verdure marks their progress; autumn brings not its golden fruits, nor in spring is the 'voice of the turtle heard in the land!'

From the extreme summit of Sinai the great plain of Râhah is not seen, for the vast mass of Mount Horeb, now called the Sufsâfeh, or mountain of the willow, intervenes. Nor could the narrow valley at the foot of the mountain on the south-east side possibly be the plain where the host of Israel were encamped. No one gazing down upon the slopes at this side of the mountain can fail to perceive how utterly unsuitable they are for the encampment of two millions of souls. The monks may bring forward any amount of doubtful traditions to support their theory that Jebel Mûsa is the true site of the giving of the law; they may point out to the credulous all the exact spots where Moses stood during that awful interview, but their labour is vain. In the same way those who would substitute Mount Serbâl as the scene of the law-giving, certainly do so in defiance of the obstacles presented by the natural features surrounding that mountain. With all deference to such eminent names as Lepsius, Bartlett, Dr. Stewart, and above all, the illustrious traveller

Burckhardt, I cannot conceive, after having ascended both mountains, how anyone can put aside the overwhelming evidences in favour of Sinai. The case is so concisely and ably stated by Dr. Porter in Murray's excellent 'Handbook for Syria and Palestine,' which doubtless all travellers who visit Sinai will provide themselves with, that I must refer them to its pages. There is most assuredly no plain anywhere near the base of Mount Serbâl, the only approach to an open space being the Wady Aleiyât; and anyone who has traversed with difficulty its uneven, stony, and narrow defile, surely can never conceive that a mighty host could be encamped there. If for no other reason than to satisfy themselves on this point, I would strongly recommend all travellers, in spite of its difficulty, to ascend Mount Serbâl, for it is surprising how very few of those who go to Sinai by the Wady Feirân seem to do this.

After remaining more than half an hour on the summit, we retraced our steps to the curious hollow in the shoulder of the mountain, where are seen the ruined chapel of Elias with its solitary cypress tree, a very lofty and venerable-looking one, and a small pool of clear water. The footmarks made by Mahomet's camel, the cleft in the rock where Moses hid himself from the glory of the Almighty, and other holy places in whose authenticity the monks and Arabs have perfect belief, will be pointed out to those in search of the marvellous. Passing, by a very rough and difficult track, along the narrow defiles of red granite cliffs which extend all the way to the Sufsâfeh, we reached a small chapel dedicated to

the Virgin. We lunched here, and afterwards set out to scale the rough steep ascent of Mount Horeb. It is very nearly perpendicular, and you have to drag yourself from crag to crag by the free use of both hands and feet. I was rather surprised at one very trying point, where I had stopped to rest for a few minutes, to find, stuck in a cleft of the rock, the card of Major-General R——, Senior United Service Club, whom I had known in Rome, apparently just as he had left it, not at all discoloured or injured. I carefully replaced the gallant officer's card just where I found it, and have no doubt it still remains in position. We at last stood at the base of the great round mass of granite, some 30 or 40 feet high, forming the actual summit of this peak of Horeb, but felt too tired to undertake its ascent. Besides, there was nothing further to be gained, for here we stood on the very rocks once hallowed by the awful manifestation of God as He talked to His chosen servant. Vain, of course, is it to presume to identify the exact spot where Moses stood, because from any one of the several sharp peaks at this point the great plain of Râhah is distinctly visible, and the glory of the Divine Presence would be beheld by all the vast host. The ravine up which Moses climbed from the plain below is close at hand, and from the spot on which we stood, down to the base of the mountain, is a sheer precipice. In reverent silence we gazed upon the sublime scene, for he must needs have a cold heart and feeble imagination who could remain unmoved under the influence of the associations connected with the tremendous events here wrought out.

From this point there is a noble view of Mount St. Catherine, which rises majestically from the extreme end of the Wady-er-Râhah. Its form is peculiarly grand, for the face of the mountain is one polished mass of naked red granite, shining like burnished copper in the bright sun-light. Standing boldly out from the neighbouring heights, with deep valleys on either side, it irresistibly impresses the traveller; nor is this to be wondered at, when we remember that it is more than 8,500 feet in height. We did not attempt the hazardous feat of descending to the plain below, but retraced our steps to the chapel of the Virgin, and from there proceeded to the mouth of Wady Sheikh, by a very steep and difficult path, reaching the convent about 4.30 P.M.

The whole day's excursion, treading almost every step upon holy ground, was of the deepest and most solemn interest. That night I sat up somewhat late, writing my journal and a letter home, and towards midnight I walked from the corridor, where my room was situated, on to the *loggia* at the top of the lofty convent walls. The deepest silence reigned around, for all the inmates of the convent were buried in repose; no voice of night-bird or cry of wild animal fell upon the ear, all was hushed as the grave. But what a strange picture of beauty did the still valley present. The moon had arisen and suffused with its lustrous light the entire side of the great mountain, until every pinnacle and ridge of rock stood out in acute relief. The smooth precipices, which glistened like gold in the dazzling sunlight, now shone like silver in the serene rays of the

moon. It was all the more strangely beautiful from the striking contrast presented by the opposite side of the valley being buried in deep shade, while the line of shadow could be traced along the base of the mountain till it met the plain of Râhah. Over all spread the calm purple sky, on whose brow gleamed a countless array of stars, and the great plain beyond the mountain was bathed in the soft light. In the immediate vicinity was the garden of the convent, with its blossoming fruit trees decked in their snowy robes, contrasting with dark cypresses towering aloft. The hour and the extraordinary beauty of the scene invited to reverent meditation, and one felt overwhelmed by the august traditions connected with the spot. How different was it on that day when the Presence of Jehovah was seen by the awe-stricken congregation of Israel resting on the mountain, while thunders and lightnings shook the solid earth, 'and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled.' Assuredly no grander place could well be found than these sublime solitudes for the unfolding of those awful phenomena, which the chosen people were here called on to witness.

We spent an entire afternoon rambling about the plain of Râhah and wadys at the base of Horeb and Mount St. Catherine; and Mr. Ashton, who handles his pencil very skilfully, made some capital sketches from different points. It was terribly hot work wandering over that arid plain, but we were anxious to investigate as much as possible into the various disputed sites. A few Bedawin tents occupied a

hollow near the base of Sufsâfeh, but their inmates took no notice of us. There is a small ruin with garden inclosure, and some very lofty cypresses, not far from this, beyond which is the shallow bed of a dry watercourse, filled with great stones and masses of *débris*. This wady runs round the whole base of Horeb till it merges in the Wady-esh-Sheikh, and the plain of Râhah slopes upwards from it. Thus the lapse of ages has so far changed the fall of the ground here, that the mountain can hardly be said to rise up at once like a wall from the plain. The best point for viewing Mount Sinai, or rather Mount Horeb, is from the plain on the summit of the gravelly bank which slopes upwards from this dried-up watercourse. You see the whole of its most perpendicular side, the probable spot where Moses received the tables of the law, the wide entrance to Wady Sheikh on the extreme left, and the noble mass of Mount St. Catherine on the right, reaching the majestic altitude of 8,551 feet above the sea. You are in the midst of absolute solitude and silence; there is nothing to distract the mind from contemplating the scene where such mighty events occurred.

Burckhardt, who visited the convent in the spring of 1816, gives a very complete description of it, characterised by all his accuracy of detail and fulness of information. From this scarce work I have gathered the following details as to the intercourse between the monks and their Bedawin allies, though it is probable that the relations between them are now somewhat changed. At that time no Arab, except the

servants of the convent, was admitted within the walls; and as the custom was that all Bedawin, whether men, women or children, should receive bread for breakfast and supper, this food was lowered down to them from the window. Though there were not a great many in the neighbourhood, still scarcely a day passed without the brethren requiring to furnish bread for thirty or forty persons. Last century the Arabs enjoyed the privilege of having a dish of cooked meat, both at breakfast and supper, but this right they were induced to give up. The branch convent at Cairo also was subject to similar claims on the part of those Bedawin who chanced to be there. The convent has its *ghafeirs*, or protectors, twenty-four in number among the tribes inhabiting the desert between Syria and the Red Sea, but the more remote of them are only entitled to a few annual presents in clothes and money, while the Tawarah protectors are constantly hovering near the convent, trying to extort what they can. If a sheikh calls at the convent, he receives in addition to his bread, some coffee, sugar, soap, a handkerchief, or similar articles. If this is refused, the sheikh takes vengeance by laying waste some of the gardens belonging to the convent, and then has to be conciliated by a present. In 1816 the monks solicited the protection of Mohammed Ali, though Burckhardt was inclined to doubt the wisdom of this course. Sometimes disputes occurred, and the Arabs would ill-use any monk they might catch, or they would fire into the convent from the cliffs above, and the holy fathers retorted from their armoury, but were very careful not to kill

any one. Though their neighbours were restive at times, still the monks remarked to Burckhardt, 'If our convent had been subject to the revolutions and oppressions of Egypt or Syria, it would long ago have been abandoned; but Providence has preserved us by giving us the Bedawin for neighbours.' He estimated the expenses of the convent, notwithstanding the demands of the Arabs, as but moderate. All supplies were drawn from Egypt, but the communication with Cairo was not regular. The yearly consumption of corn was then about 2,500 bushels, and the annual expenditure something like 1,000*l.* sterling. The monks complained greatly to Burckhardt of poverty, and the prior declared he was sometimes obliged to borrow from the Bedawin, at high interest, but this statement the former was inclined to doubt.

The peninsula of Sinai consists of two main divisions of territory: first, the desert of Tîh, bounded by the Mediterranean, Syria, and the mountain ranges of Sinai; and second, the country embraced between the gulfs of Suez and Akabah, which is in fact the true peninsula. The desert of Tîh, 'the wandering,' from the forty years' wanderings of the Israelites, is, generally speaking, an elevated plateau of hard gravelly soil, with a few limestone ranges intersecting its surface. The mountain ranges of the Sinaitic peninsula I have endeavoured already partially to describe. The Arabs who inhabit this peninsula are known by the name of Tawarah, or 'people of Tur,' and are divided into five tribes, as follows—1. The Sawâlihah, the principal tribe, who inhabit the country west

of the convent, where their date-valleys are situated, which are the exclusive property of individuals, but the pasturing-places are common to the tribe. They are the oldest and most distinguished tribe, and have the privilege of conducting travellers to the convent, because they are its recognised *ghafeirs*, or 'protectors.' 2. The Aleikât, an old tribe and few in number, but who intermarry with the first named, and have also the privilege of conducting travellers. They live to the east of the convent, towards the Gulf of Akabah; as also do 3, the Muzeiny, who came into the peninsula at a later period, and intermarry with the Aleikât. 4. The Aulad Suleimân, a few families near the village of Tur; and 5, the Beni Wâsel, who live near the ruined village of Sherm, on the Gulf of Akabah. These five tribes unite together whenever any foreign tribe of northern Bedawin attacks them; and occasionally, but not often, have bloody quarrels among themselves. They are altogether an inferior race to their brethren of the Syrian deserts, and their dress is not nearly so picturesque. Instead of the silk *kufiyeh*, bound round the head with a rope of twisted camel's hair, and the white flowing *abba*, the Tawarah wear a turban, or sometimes a shabby *tarboosh*, on the head, and a blue or white robe is fastened round the waist by a leather belt, in which are stuck a pistol, a knife, and some cartridges. Some of them carry a queer-looking sword slung across their back, and a long rusty gun, which looks as if it would, when discharged, injure no one except its owner. Their numbers are estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000.

The Tawarah are a poor tribe, for their herds are scanty and they have few camels, there being but little pasturage in the peninsula from the great scarcity of rain. No sheikh has more than eight camels, few of the men have even two; sometimes two or three persons are partners in one camel, and numbers have none at all. They have no horses, but some of them own a few asses. 'Their means of subsistence,' Burckhardt states, 'are derived from their pastures, the transport trade between Suez and Cairo' (the railway must now have pretty well put an end to this), 'the sale, at the latter place, of the charcoal which they burn in their mountains, of the gum arabic which they collect, and of their dates and other fruits. The produce of this trade is laid out by them at Cairo in purchasing clothing and provisions, particularly corn, for the supply of their families, and if anything remains in hand they buy with it a few sheep and goats at Tor or at Sherm, to which latter place they are brought by the Bedawin of the opposite coast of Arabia.'

Porter gives the following interesting account of some of their social ways: 'Some of their marriage customs are so peculiar as to be worthy of record. The Arab maiden is bought, not won; her father regulates the price according to his own importance and her beauty. It is said to range from five to thirty dollars. When the terms have been settled between the father and the intended bridegroom, the latter receives a green branch of tree or shrub, which he sticks in his turban and wears for three days, to show that he is espoused to a virgin. The young lady is seldom made acquainted with the

transaction. When she comes home in the evening at the head of her father's sheep, she is met a short distance from the camp by her 'intended' and a couple of his young friends, who carry her off by force to her father's tent. This, however, requires some expertness; for if the damsel at all suspects their designs before they get sufficiently near to seize her, she fights like a fury, defending herself with stones, and often inflicting deep wounds, even though she may not feel altogether indifferent to her lover. This is Desert etiquette, and the more she struggles the more she is applauded ever after by her companions. When at last vanquished and carried to the tent, one of the bridegroom's relatives throws an *abba* over her, completely covering her head, and then pronounces the name of her husband, which to that moment she may not have heard. After this ceremony, she is dressed by her mother and female relations in new clothes provided by the bridegroom, placed on the back of a gaily caparisoned camel, and still struggling in the restraining grasp of her husband's friends, paraded three times round his tent. She is then carried into the tent amid the shouts of the assembled encampment, and the ceremony concludes. A still more singular custom prevails among the Muzeiny, but is confined to that tribe. When the young lady has been wrapped in the *abba* she is permitted to flee to the mountains, and the next day the bridegroom goes in pursuit. Many days often elapse ere he can find her; the time is, of course, longer or shorter, according to the impression made on the fair one's heart.'

Such are a few particulars respecting the inhabitants of the peninsula of Sinai, with some of whom the traveller must necessarily be brought a good deal in contact during his journey to and from the convent. I can only add my humble testimony, in which I think my two travelling friends will concur, that we found our Tawarah escort always most obliging, gentle, and courteous in their intercourse with us, and it was with real regret that we said good-bye to them at Akabah, after sojourning together for twenty days.

CHAPTER VI.

SINAI TO AKABAH.

We had been the better part of four days enjoying the quiet of the convent and making excursions to the neighbouring places of interest, but it was now necessary to decide as to our farther progress. Mr. Ashton, from the time he first reached Cairo, had been very anxious to undertake the journey to Petra, but neither Mr. Gere nor I were much inclined for it. We knew that it involved considerable extra outlay, both in time and money, and the difficulty of getting any information at Cairo as to the probability of the route being open, as well as in finding a dragoman who was really qualified to take travellers to the famous city, made us finally abandon the idea. We understood also, that no one had been to Petra for three years, so when we started from Cairo our calculations as to the supply of gold, provisions, &c., to be taken with us, were entirely based on the supposition that our Desert wanderings would extend only to the peninsula of Sinai. Now, however, our enterprising dragoman, Achmet Fichawi, strongly advised us to go on to the Holy Land by Petra, offering to take us for an extra

sum which, though sufficiently large, was in reality much less than what the regular qualified Petra dragoman invariably charges. The fact is, that it is a great object with this class to produce testimonials of their fitness to conduct a party to the celebrated rock-hewn city, and this probably accounted for Achmet's eagerness that we should attempt it. It thus came to be a question of returning to Suez by the same route as that we had just traversed, or going direct to Hebron or Gaza across the dreary desert of Tîh, by way of Nukhl. This route involves, probably, several days' delay at Nukhl, because the Tawarah are not entitled to conduct travellers beyond that point. To these two alternatives was now added this new plan of going to Petra, and thence, by the Wady Arabah, to Hebron. If the latter plan were adopted, it would be necessary, in the first instance, to proceed to Akabah for the purpose of coming to terms with Sheikh Mohammed, without credentials from whom no traveller can enter the Petra territory. In the event of disturbances in the country rendering it unsafe to pass through Edom, all that could be done would be to strike off to Nukhl by the Hâj road, and so gain the Holy Land.

Upon a good deal of consideration, Mr. Gere and I agreed to try the Petra expedition after all. I all along had a hankering after it, so easily fell in to the change of route; but our excellent American friend felt misgivings on the subject. He, in fact, had never contemplated even a journey to Mount Sinai, until Mr. Ashton and I induced him kindly to forego his intention of proceeding to Jerusalem by the

ordinary steamer route to Jaffa. The next question was, where could sufficient gold be obtained for our inevitable expenses in going to Petra. This, at the lowest estimate, would involve an extra expenditure of nearly 60*l.*; but, on leaving Cairo, we took only what was enough for the usual requirements of the journey to Jerusalem. Fortunately, Mr. Ashton had a good supply of circular notes, and our dragoman assured us that he would get the monks to give us gold in exchange for some of them, at a certain price. This little banking operation we accordingly effected, after many difficulties on the part of the holy fathers, who charged a very respectable commission on the transaction. Certainly the rate of exchange at Cairo for bank bills on London is generally heavily against travellers, and it might be some time before the notes that we now gave could be turned into gold. In fact, considering that the monks knew nothing of us, and that, although the magic autograph of Messrs. Coutts & Co. at the foot of a bill is held in profound respect on all the exchanges of Europe, still their operations hardly extend to the wilderness of Sinai; when one took these circumstances into view, the monks might well have declined the transaction. However, at last the necessary sum was counted out in Austrian gold pieces, and, in addition to the notes, the Superior, from whose hoards the money came, was fortified with a letter to the British Consul at Cairo, in the event of his assistance being needed in arranging with the bankers.

These preliminaries over, Achmet next despatched one of

our Arabs on a dromedary with a letter to Sheikh Mohammed, or his agent, at Akabah, who would, by travelling night and day, be able to meet us with an answer in the course of three or four days. All that now remained to be done was to get our tents and baggage in order, and to bid adieu to our friends the monks, after first seeing the Superior's room, and recording our names in the visitors' book. Any contributions which travellers think proper to give, in addition to the stated charge for supplies furnished from the convent stores, will, no doubt, be 'thankfully received,' and will help to pay the cost of an exceedingly elegant new white stone *campanile*, or bell-tower, which was barely finished when we were there. It has three tiers of columns, one above another, and an ornate cornice at the top. The brethren are summoned to prayers by a sort of gong, consisting of a thin wooden board, which, when struck sharply, emits a sharp, distinct sound. Twice during the night we heard the gong sounding, and at first, in the deep stillness pervading the convent at that hour, it had a startling and peculiar effect. But on Sunday morning, the monk whose duty it was to summon his brethren to early prayers, excelled his previous efforts by giving the most marvellously varied and involved series of rapid knockings on the board—some slow, others *staccato* and rapid—the whole being the result of considerable practice on this singular instrument.

Our preparations now being complete, we were wished all success on our Petra expedition by the few monks with whom we had been brought in contact; and, after the usual

difficulties in getting our escort well together, we said good-bye to the convent about 11 o'clock on Monday, March 4. We just skirted the end of the plain of Râḥah, and then proceeded along the great Wady-esh-Sheikh, which is bounded on both sides by lofty granite mountains. At first it is a broad wady, seamed all along its face with traces of the winter torrents that sweep violently down these shallow valleys, but after a while it becomes somewhat more contracted, and then expands into an open plain. We passed without examination the small white tomb of Sheikh Sâlih, from whence the valley derives its name. Indeed, though the Arabs hold it to be a sacred spot, and bring their rude offerings to hang up in the building, it has little of interest to recommend it to the notice of travellers. Dr. Porter states that once a year, in June, the whole tribe of the Tawarah visits the tomb, encamping round it for three days, and sacrifice sheep in honour of the saint. A short distance beyond this spot the Wady Suweirah opens out from Wady Sheikh, up which we turned, stopping for the afternoon near a well called Abu Suweirah, little more than three hours from the convent. We were anxious to push on as quickly as possible to Akabah, but it is little use ever trying to impress upon the Arabs the necessity of augmenting their usual rate of progress, at least while in their own territories. It is better to understand this, and not to fret over a few hours seemingly lost here and there; but, to do them justice, if they believe, during their progress through some neutral or doubtful district, that there is actual danger to be appre-

hended, they can get over the ground with considerable expedition.

The well near which we pitched our tents is a very poor one—a mere pool of not over-clean water, close to two or three small enclosures of what seemingly, at one time, had been a miserable garden. Towards sunset I wandered away down to the Wady Sheikh, which at this point widens out to a broad plain, and clambering up a steep rock, took a last look at the tremendous fastnesses and peaks surrounding the scene of the giving of the law. The mind was in unison with the sublime associations of the spot, more especially as the gathering shades of night were closing in after a short interval of twilight, and the lifelessness and stillness of the place heightened the effect. My two friends also were rambling about the rocky eminences round our camp—indeed, Mr. Ashton was always the most active of us all, and especially enjoyed a good stiff climb up one of the numerous heights which looked down on our temporary resting-places. The grandeur of the Bible narrative, describing the events which took place in the vicinity of Sinai, is strikingly brought out when it is read and reverently meditated upon under the shadows of those mountains which, for so many ages of the world's history, have attracted devoted throngs of pilgrims from all nations.

Next morning we started about half-past seven, and not long afterwards reached the top of the ridge forming the watershed between the two gulfs bounding the Sinaitic peninsula. From this point we got an extensive view across

the long sloping plains leading towards the Gulf of Akabah, with isolated masses of dusky mountains appearing on the distant horizon, while the huge form of Um Shaumer, styled by Stanley the 'Mont Blanc' of those parts, could be seen in the direction of Sinai. Two hours beyond this we entered a very narrow deep ravine, running for a long way through the mountains of Fer'a, which takes a sinuous course amid the sterile rocks. The rock is of a very dark colour, almost like coal or shale, but there is slate in it, and it is veined with streaks of porphyry. The upper parts of the precipitous cliffs are often of sandstone, producing a curious mixture of colours, and showing a singular geological formation. After some hours of this strange, wild scenery, we entered the Wady S'al, and came to a halt for the night, before 5 o'clock, in a broad part of the valley, having some white-looking mountains in the hazy distance. There are a good number of Desert shrubs in this valley, some of them great favourites with the camels—especially one small green plant with sharp prickles, and a quiet, unobtrusive flower. The sun was very hot to-day, but the wind, owing to the high latitudes in which we were, was very sharp. By a small pocket aneroid which Mr. Gere carried, we ascertained that we descended about 900 feet from the watershed of the two ranges of country mentioned above to the spot where our tents were pitched. In this neighbourhood are the ruins of some very old enclosures, a spot called by the Arabs 'Erweis-el-Ebeirig,' which has been identified by Professor Palmer as the Kibroth Hattaavah mentioned at

the close of Numbers (chap. xi.), one of the stations of the Israelites.

Each day's incidents of travel, such as they were, greatly resembled the others, and any account of a tour across this desert must needs be, more or less, a description of the salient features which the country presents to the general observation of travellers. As I walked through the wady this morning, I started a hare out of a tuft of prickly shrubs, the first we had yet seen; and, later on in the day, three partridges rose near our track. This day's route lay through scenery entirely different in character from that of the Sinai district. The wadys were broad, and our path led over a white sandy bottom, with hardly any stones on its surface. From this the hills, sometimes sandstone, in other parts limestone predominating, receded in irregular outlines and strangely-coloured formations. In one place they would rise in perpendicular cliffs, and again in curious pyramidal cones, while often there would be seen great detached masses of rock, just like islands, appearing above the ocean of smooth white sand. One isolated rock especially struck us, called by our dragoman 'The Pilgrim's Mount,' for it is covered with Sinaitic inscriptions and rude drawings of ibexes and other animals. From this point we had an extensive view all the way to the lofty blue ranges of mountains skirting the Gulf of Akabah; but, as the wind was blowing hard, while the sun was unpleasantly powerful, we did not stay long to admire it.

We now entered some remarkable rock scenery, unlike

any which we had yet encountered. Our track wound through defiles of high precipitous cliffs of limestone, the passage at times contracting to a mere cleft, and again leading across intervening belts of hard sand to a fresh agglomeration of fantastic rocks. In many parts the face of the rocks appeared as though it had been wrought into designs, styled in architectural phrase 'vermicular;' and above this again a smooth face of rock would arise, possibly crowned by crumbling masses of soft sandstone. It would almost appear as though the chisel must have hewn the scrolls and tracing which met the eye on all sides, so skilfully had Nature done her work. Some of the masses of rock were isolated from the main ranges, but all of them were corrugated and fissured in this strange manner, whether by water or by some other force it is difficult to say. This is the commencement of the long Wady Ghuzâleh, which afterwards widens out to an extensive plain, where we pitched our tents. Near this point is Ain Hudherah, in the midst of palm-groves that were once surrounded by walls, and here may be seen the remains of an aqueduct, as well as both Greek and Sinaitic inscriptions. This place has been the cause of much learned controversy amongst travellers and Biblical critics, many of whom identify it with the 'Hazeroth' mentioned at the end of chapter xi. of Numbers—'And the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth, and abode at Hazeroth.' Robinson, Ritter, and Stanley have all written upon the subject, and Burckhardt makes a passing allusion to it, inclining apparently to the belief that this

palm-grove, with its refreshing well, is Hazeroth. Here the children of Israel made their first halt of any duration after leaving Sinai, and the striking episode occurred of Miriam being smitten with leprosy for speaking against Moses. From this point they journeyed to the wilderness of Paran, which adjoined that of Judah, now known as Et-Tîh, and thence wandered by the sea up the Wady Arabah to Kadesh. Robinson inclines to the belief that Ain Hudherah is truly the 'Hazeroth' of Numbers; but the cautious Dean, after stating both sides of the question with his accustomed judicial impartiality and elegance of expression, leaves the reader to decide for himself.

Nothing can exceed the savage grandeur and magnificence of the scenery in the midst of which we journeyed on the following day—from the wide sandy expanse of the Wady Ghuzâleh, through the tremendous gorges of the Wady-el-Ain, until our night's abode was reached within sight of the calm waters of the Gulf of Elath, which reflected the glories of an Eastern sunset. It seems to me that the published descriptions of this part of the route to Akabah give far too meagre an account of its truly grand features, which impressed themselves in the strongest manner both upon my companions and myself. Nothing in the whole Sinaitic peninsula that we had yet seen came up to the Alpine magnificence of the towering cliffs, and the extraordinary narrowness of those defiles through which we threaded our way, makes the impending mountain heights seem more gloomy and awful. We kept for some time along the Wady Ghuzâleh, which,

curiously enough, has on one side granite rocks and sandstone on the other. About 10 o'clock we came upon a range of noble mountains, apparently of almost equal altitude with any we had yet seen. They rose up in our front, seemingly barring all farther passage that way—their serrated, sharp peaks soaring far into the thin blue atmosphere until they almost kissed the sky.

A green oasis of palm and tamarisk trees, with grass and reeds growing near a crystal stream, now greets the thirsty traveller's eye, causing a pleasant thrill of expectation. On reaching this we found that there was a beautifully clear flowing stream, meandering amidst a surrounding fringe of grass and rushes, until it was eventually swallowed up by the inexorable sand. The camels eagerly drank from its limpid pools, and we enjoyed the first draught of really pure water which had passed our lips for some days. But we were now wholly taken up with the extreme grandeur of the wonderful Wady-el-Ain, whose tortuous length we traversed during the rest of the day. We entered by a narrow gorge, not more than 20 or 30 feet wide, and glancing up at its beetling sides we beheld great granite masses rising precipitously aloft until, in some parts, they nearly met overhead. Above this again, crag upon crag, peak upon peak succeeded one another, until the mountain tops were seen far up against the azure sky. The rocks were beautifully streaked and coloured. Sometimes a long vein of dark porphyry, of a perfectly uniform breadth, would run obliquely along the mountain side for a long distance. Then strata of red and black

granite would be seen in juxtaposition, and masses of *debris* lay strewn about in all directions. At each sharp turn of the dark defile, a vast opposing wall of towering rock frowned sternly down upon the daring intruders who sought to enter this enchanted region. Resembling the desolate magnificence of Alpine fastnesses, without their clothing of dark green pines or their snowy summits, these inaccessible heights had a grandeur peculiar to themselves. There was an utter and overpowering stillness here which cast a spell upon the senses. No roar of falling torrent, or crash of an avalanche, re-echoed from crag to crag—hushed and death-like were the dark recesses of the valley. Even the harsh scream of the eagle was absent, though those inaccessible peaks might well be his home. No doubt there are times when the awful voice of the tempest thunders amidst those far-off peaks, but now a quivering fleecy mist alone hung lightly on their rent sides.

It was a scene that the pencil of a Martin or a Doré would love to depict, and irresistibly suggested thoughts of some of the paintings of those artists. 'Sadak in search of the Waters of Oblivion,' Rasselas striving to find a way out of the 'Happy Valley,' one of the terrific gorges of the *Inferno*, or similar subjects, would find appropriate surroundings in this profound abyss. Assuredly, any of our artists seeking to depict the sublime and beautiful would do well to repair to the peninsula of Sinai, and exercise their art in some of its innumerable sequestered valleys.

There were occasional palm and tamarisk trees nestling

in sheltered corners of the narrow pass, while many caper plants and a stray wild fig tree here and there relieved the dull red hue of the cliffs. We were nearly four hours in journeying through this tremendous mountain defile, which grows much wider as the wady approaches the shores of the Gulf of Akabah. The course of the winter's torrents is very distinctly defined on its sandy surface—long sweeping tracks through the gravel, huge boulders flung up near the cliffs, and sometimes a fallen palm tree, whose shattered trunk attests to the fury of the stream. At last, at about five in the afternoon, we came within sight of the coral strand of that deserted sea where once floated the proud fleets of Solomon, laden with the gold of Ophir and spices from far-distant India. A beautiful violet tint bathed the mountain ranges on the opposite shore, for the sun was fast sinking below the horizon. Very glad were we to see our familiar white tents appearing as we rounded a sharp turn in the valley; for we were tired with a long day's march, and there is something cheerful—nay, home-like even, in that rough canvas abode, with the blue smoke of a recently kindled fire circling around it. Then the satisfaction with which you throw yourself at full length on your bed, after getting rid of a pair of hot boots or shoes, while the good-natured dusky Ali bustles about with his preparations for dinner. And, after a few minutes of rest or sleep, as the case might be, it was pleasant to stroll round the camp in one's easy canvas shoes and watch all the preparations going on for the evening meals of ourselves and our attendants.

In the first place our stock of poultry, now sadly diminished in numbers, were released from the hencoop in which all day long they had been shut up, and allowed to stray where they pleased. Poor creatures, they never went very far, but, after eagerly drinking some water, would peer about the tents or the camels' bags for any stray grains of food that they might pick up; then, as soon as twilight closed in, they again instinctively sought their narrow quarters in the hencoop, although one would have thought they might prefer some less confined roosting-place. The camels also constituted a source of constant interest with their strange sagacious ways, wayward, yet withal very docile, strong long-suffering and most patient in endurance. There the obedient creatures stand with their heavy load of, perhaps, 300 or 400 pounds weight, resting on their lank sides, where the well-worn pack saddle has made deep grooves in the thick furry hair. Presently the owner comes up, and giving a jerk to the long rope of camel's hair —which, wound round the animal's jaws and head, constitutes a rough bridle—accompanied by a peculiar guttural hissing sound, brings the camel down with a heavy thump on its knees. After a deep, grumbling groan or cry, peculiar to the 'ship of the desert,' he settles himself quietly down until the operation of unloading is finished. This over, he instantly rises, with a sort of triumphant shake of relief, and trots, or more generally stalks, off on an expedition of his own to search for grass or shrubs, which is his special weakness. As one by one the camels are unloaded, they

wander away to join their fellows, frequently straying in this manner for more than a mile from the camp. After browsing a while upon such herbage as they chance to find, as soon as the increasing darkness warns them that night is falling, they slowly return to the camp, though sometimes it is necessary to send one of the boys to look after such of the animals as may have strayed too far away. Thus they are gradually all gathered together, and kneel down amidst their masters, who have taken up their respective positions near the fire, and presently receive their meal of Indian corn, an ample supply of which each camel owner has laid in at Cairo. The pack saddles and multifarious sacks, cloths and other belongings of each camel, are then piled up in a sort of parapet, behind which, and further protected from the night wind by the ample forms of the docile animals, the Arabs curl themselves up in their scanty attire and contrive to pass the night comfortably enough.

Many travellers have written of the camel, his strange ways and marvellous utility to his masters the wild children of the desert. The finest breed of this thoroughly oriental animal comes from the region of Mesopotamia, but very large fine ones, of the Turkoman breed, are raised in Anadolia: Nubia and Egypt also produce good animals of a lighter colour and smaller size. The Bedawin prefer the females to the males, as the former support thirst better, and their pace is easier in riding; but in Egypt the males are preferred, for their greater ability to bear heavy loads. The French, during the time they held Egypt, established a corps of 500

camel soldiers, who kept the Bedawin in check by this unusual brigade of cavalry, if they may be thus styled. Long endurance of fatigue and thirst is one of the special characteristics of the camel; in summer, for instance, the Nejid camel need only have water every fourth day, while the Anadolian requires to drink each alternate day. During winter, again, they hardly ever drink, except on a long journey; and when the herbs and grasses on which they feed are fresh and juicy, the animals can dispense entirely with water.

Their powers of endurance, even in rapid travelling, are remarkable. Burckhardt mentions an instance of a camel belonging to a mameluke Bey of Esneh which had been purchased for 150 Spanish dollars. This camel was to go for a wager, in one day, between sunrise and sunset, from Esneh to Germe and back again, the distance being 125 miles. The faithful animal arrived at a village sixteen miles from Esneh on its return home, when its strength failed, after accomplishing 115 miles in eleven hours. Allowing for a slower rate of speed, this animal could doubtless have gone nearly 200 miles in the twenty-four hours. Still the speed of a camel, except for quite short distances, never approaches that of a horse, although the former can keep up, for nine hours, a trot of twelve miles an hour. They cannot be induced long to keep at a gallop, half an hour or so being the utmost period for which a camel will sustain this rapid pace. Their pleasantest pace is their long swinging walk or amble, little better than five miles an hour; so easy, in

fact, is the motion, that I frequently, especially on hot days, fell into a dose on the animal's back.

The camel does not come to its perfection in size and appearance till it reaches the age of twelve years, although by this time his fur may be rather worn and discoloured. The hump is the great test of the beast's condition; if it is well covered with fat the Arab proprietor knows that his faithful dromedary will do his work upon a moderate allowance of food. Sometimes, after a very long journey, the hump almost disappears, a sure sign of privations having been encountered, and not till after three or four months' rest and good food does the singular excrescence attain its wonted proportions. As a rule, the condition of the camel testifies to the rank and wealth of its owner; those belonging to powerful and rich sheikhs have fat, fully developed humps, and sleek, furry sides; whereas the poor man's camel is lank, humpless, and smooth-skinned. In Egypt they have altogether a hard time of it, having generally to carry enormous loads of 300 or 400 pounds weight; besides often, in addition, the owner's wife and family perched above. They get little food, but plenty of hard knocks, and are dragged about with a troublesome nose-ring, this being a degradation which their brethren of the Desert are never called on to submit to. But the latter have to endure from time to time branding with a hot iron, for the purposes of identification. The mark is generally made on the animal's shoulder, and each tribe and family has a separate distinguishing sign of their own. It is absolutely necessary that

some distinct means of recognising so valuable an article of property as this truly useful animal should exist, for it frequently constitutes the whole of a man's capital, stock-in-trade, and means of worldly subsistence. Its hair furnishes wool for his clothing, its milk affords him nutritious food, its willing back transports his habitation, his poor belongings, and his wife and family from valley to valley. The actual value in money of a camel in Egypt, for a fair average animal, may be from 80 to 100 dollars; but 200, and even 300, dollars are no uncommon prices to be paid for fine specimens of the dromedary. Altogether, I was much interested in these sagacious and strange animals, and it was a pleasure to see the affectionate manner in which my special attendant, Salem by name, used to treat his camel, collecting quantities of the shrub he liked to browse upon for his evening meal, and during the march often feeding him with bunches of whatever herbage came to hand. As a rule, most writers speak favourably of the 'ship of the desert;' but the eminent traveller, Mr. Gifford Palgrave, who is also well known as an accomplished author, in his work upon Arabia, says some very hard things respecting the faithful creature.

We were now all impatient to get on to Petra, for the sight of the purple waters of the Gulf of Akabah had inspired us with fresh energy and determination. In little more than half an hour after leaving our camping-ground at the entrance of the Wady-el-Ain, we reached the shores of the gulf. The strand is very rocky and strewn with large stones

washed down from the broad wady by the winter's torrents, but some wide tracts of sand, covered with coarse grass, have been formed between the cliff and the sea. The gulf is about twelve or fourteen miles broad at this point, and its opposite coast is distinguished by the very lofty serrated ranges of mountains which rise up precipitously from the shore. These seem to extend from the entrance of the gulf almost as far as Akabah at its head, and seen in the morning sun, had a fine glow of purple colouring on their rugged sides. The eye ranged all along either strand, searching in vain for any appearance of villages or inhabitants, while the calm surface of this silent sea was unchequered by sail or keel. We observed a palm tree or two scattered here and there on the upper margin of the flat beach.

On the side of the gulf, along which we now slowly wound our way, the red sandstone cliffs slope gradually up from the narrow shore until they attain to some height. In many places, especially where, from the influence of the atmosphere or rush of water, a fall of rock has taken place, the colours of the various strata are singularly varied and vivid. To a certain extent they resemble the marvellous tints observed in the rocks of Petra, a brilliant orange and strong red being the prevailing hues. Then again, sometimes the cliffs recede from the strand, leaving a broad tract of gravel or stony soil, covered with short grass, with perchance a thorny acacia or palm tree to afford a slight shade from the sun's oppressive heat. There are tolerably well-defined tracks

over the hard sand, for this is a route of the Tawarah on their road from Sinai to Akabah. One special feature of the Gulf of Akabah are the quantities of red and white coral, as well as many specimens of really beautiful shells, which may be picked up. I must say I was inclined at times to linger too long in looking for specimens to bring home, but it was tantalising to find finely-variegated shells very much injured, owing to the fierce sun having bleached their colours entirely away. But, still, there were an infinite variety of them painting the soft gravelly strand, besides many different kinds of coral. The red species, with small tubes, to which has been given the name of the 'organ pipe coral,' the 'brain coral,' so called from its resemblance to this part of the human head, besides all the more familiar descriptions, could have been picked up in any quantities. We often saw great heaps of the large pyramidal-shaped shells, whose surface, when the outer crust is scraped off, is so finely streaked with mother-of-pearl tints. They were all empty, and generally much broken and discoloured, because the Arabs collect the shells and extract the animals from them; for, when dried in the sun, they are esteemed a good article of diet. We pursued our way along the seashore for more than two hours without seeing any signs of human beings, when, suddenly, near a small palm-grove, we came upon two or three Arabs, who appeared to follow the vocation of fishermen. We bought a few of the familiar brown, glossy speckled shells of the kind which, as children, we have all often held to our ears to listen to the moan of the sea.

Achmet also purchased some very tolerable fish, which we had that day for dinner, infinitely superior to any of the Nile fish that we tasted. They are taken in a cast-net, which is of a circular form, loaded at the lower part with small pieces of lead. The fisherman walks quietly along the shelving rocks close to the deep water, and when he perceives a shoal of fish, throws his net in such a way that it lights upon the surface in its distended form, and encloses the fish as it sinks. There were great numbers of those curious creatures, the hermit crabs, lying about the beach, who, on the approach of our camels, would start off just as the broad, ponderous foot was about to crush the diminutive crab, house and all. They run very fast, and seem to make small journeys of their own, even on to the grassy banks beyond the strand. No sooner is one touched on the claw or body, if it chances to be airing its crustaceous person in the sun, than the animal shrinks within its shell and resists all attempts to be dislodged.

Constant headlands of rock project into the Gulf of Akabah all along this coast. They are separated from each other by bays of delightfully smooth sand, though at intervals a rocky plateau will extend some distance into the dark blue sea. These terraces of rock are often extensive, and covered with seaweed, while little pools of water are left in hollow places, where the naturalist would find a rare collection of marvellous zoophytes, molluscs, and marine mosses. Strangely-coloured delicate feathery mosses, and minute varieties of seaweed, whose slimy tendrils clung to the

pebbles and shells, invited to further inspection, in the hope of finding some fine specimen to carry away. The tide recedes sufficiently far to enable you, if the sea is calm, to reach the extreme verge of the shelf of rock, beyond which is an unfathomed depth of water. When the surface is unruffled by the wind, it is a strange sight to peer down into the blue depths of this deserted sea, and to mark the wonderful formations of coral which the cunning hand of Nature has fashioned. They assume various shapes and brilliant hues, sometimes a dark crimson shading away into a pale pink, or again, a delicate pure creamy white. A marvellous marine architecture truly is exposed to view in these crystalline depths, branches of trees, open basket-work, curious natural arches and massy columns, all blended together in defiance of order or law. Long waving stems of broad-leaved seaweed slowly move to and fro, with measured rise and fall, as they are influenced by the eddying currents which prevail in these unknown depths.

Our camping-ground on this, our first day's journey along the shores of the Gulf of Akabah, was on a sandy plain, quite close to the sea. It was nearly six o'clock when we reached the tents, and the setting sun bathed the opposite mountains with his rosy beams. The contrast between that warm blush of colour and the cold grey of the cliffs behind us, with the intervening channel of intensely purple sea, was singularly fine. Nothing struck me more than the rare beauty of the different aspects of this narrow sea, according as it was lit up by the sun or sleeping in shade, while the

light winds and varying temperature at different periods of the day all contributed to influence the colouring. If a fleecy cloud chanced to veil the sun for a few minutes, as it gradually passed away the most surprising tints would follow, and broad streaks of deep purple, dark green, grey, and pale blue would be seen at different parts of the gulf, imparting a chameleon hue to its glassy surface.

This had been an important day, for, in addition to our reaching the far-distant Elanitic gulf, we were gladdened by meeting the messenger whom Achmet had despatched from the convent with a letter to the sheikh at Akabah. He certainly had not wasted his time on the road, and greeted us with a joyful countenance, which already bespoke favourable news. Carefully drawing forth from the folds of his cloak a letter duly sealed and addressed, he awaited to hear its contents, while we gathered round our dragoman in eager curiosity to learn our chances of getting to Petra. The letter was brief, but to the point. It was from the representative of Sheikh Mohammed, who stated that he was delighted to hear of some travellers approaching Akabah, that the way to Petra was quite open, and that the sheikh, who was away in the mountains, had been sent for, and would be at Akabah shortly after our arrival. We were now all eagerness and expectation; the glories of the capital of Edom, to reach which so many travellers had essayed in vain, would, before long, be unfolded to our view, and we should be able to astonish our quiet friends by glowing descriptions of the wonders of Petra.

I enjoyed a delightful stroll along the still strand that evening, and drank in to the full the placid beauty of the scene as, one by one, the stars appeared in the sapphire sky. All dead and deserted was the sea; no sound could be heard save the dull, distant roar of the surf upon a coral reef on the opposite shore; no twinkle of fire from any stray Arab encampment shot a fitful gleam along the wave-kissed strand. The air was soft and balmy, the cliffs behind were faintly hung with a diaphanous mist, and a brilliant phosphorescent light made clusters of sparkling gems to glow for an instant, as the wavelets lightly broke upon the pebbly shore. Then is the time to dwell fondly on home scenes, to recall the familiar faces of the loved ones in far-distant lands, to listen to the melody of voices whose lightest accents send a thrill of joy to the heart. The faintly remembered songs of childhood, the invigorating strains of youth, the joyous burst of revelry which greets manhood's advancing years, seem to blend into one strange, solemn strain as they imperceptibly mingle with the monotonous cadence of the surf of yonder coral reef! These are the moments which make one forget the toilsome march under a burning sun, between dreadful walls of overarching granite, or tramping wearily over the thirsty plain, panting for a draught of fresh water. All the long dormant poetry of the most stolid nature seeks to exert its potent sway, and the holier aspirations after the glories of the unseen world, which must surely influence all who visit this remarkable land, seem as though now they could shape themselves into glowing language.

A delightful soft morning greeted us on the second day of our march along the gulf. Pleasant it was riding on the camel and watching the purple waves crisply breaking upon the shell-strewn beach, and the gradual changes in the aspect of the opposite mountains as the sun rose higher in the heavens. My two friends are generally a good way ahead in the mornings, for, as usual, I lag behind to enjoy a smoke while the tents are being dismantled and the camels loaded. I occasionally try to read a book while riding, but must admit that it is not comfortable work, and the half-dozen words or so of Arabic that one picks up are soon exhausted after the morning salutation between yourself and your camel driver. I got regularly into the way of watching that matutinal break-up of our comfortable establishment of the previous evening, the ample breakfast materials being disposed of, the multifarious articles of furniture and baggage being gradually absorbed by the different camels, and the old sheikh giving his orders with amazing energy and volubility of voice. A most courteous son of the desert he was, mild in aspect, dignified withal in appearance, though his arms were bare and no sandal or shoe decked his feet. But as all that I could do to show my appreciation of his smiling courtesy was, in response to his profuse touchings of heart, lips, and forehead, to imitate these well-meant salutations, our intercourse was necessarily limited. I get on better with our good-natured Nubian cook, who speaks Italian fluently; and Ali, the civil, active waiter, with his remarkable broken English, is glad to give information when the dragoman is

on ahead. Salem, my particular camel leader, is the owner of this animal and one of the baggage camels; in fact, is quite a man of property among the Tawarah. He is about thirty-five years of age, and possessed of a most agreeable countenance, besides being of a cheerful, happy disposition. He sings away to himself by the hour, never is out of humour, and is touchingly attentive to the wants of his camel. All day long he is on the out-look for food to give it, picking up large quantities of the green prickly shrub it likes, frequently going a good way off the track to find this particular plant. I was constantly dismounting this day to pick up shells, as they happened to be very abundant. Greatly did I regret our inability to delay long enough to give me time to search more carefully for specimens which had not suffered by lying exposed to the powerful rays of the sun. To-day also I indulged in the novel sensation of a bathe, in a shallow sandy lagoon on one side of a ledge of rock. I had little fancy to trust myself in the deep water beyond, not only on account of the dangerous surf beating against the rock, but because visions of sharks, which abound in this gulf, came up to destroy any pleasure in an unrestrained swim. Soon after leaving this point, we proceeded along the base of some tolerably lofty granite cliffs on our left hand, and about half-past three arrived at a long jutting-out headland of rock, which bars farther progress in that direction. The only way to overcome this obstacle is to climb by a very steep pass, called the Nukb Huweimirât, until the top of the mountain ridge is reached, when, by an equally precipitous path, you

descend to a wady which leads to the shore again. It was a wonder how the baggage camels managed to transport their heavy burdens up this break-neck pass, the path being in many places little better than natural stairs, each step requiring the utmost caution. Our tents were pitched at the entrance of the short wady on the other side of the pass, and within sight of the palm-groves of Akabah. It was excessively hot in the tent that night, and we were obliged to divest ourselves of coat and waistcoat to get some relief; the thermometer stood at 75° in the tent.

Next day was Sunday, and we welcomed the day of rest, as assuredly our camels did also. The thermometer was 86° in the tent, and it was too hot to attempt walking exercise till the sun began to abate his fervent heat. We gratefully, as usual, offered up our service of prayer and thanksgiving to Him who had preserved us in our wanderings and abundantly blessed our store, even in this remote wilderness. I bathed again this afternoon, but the sea was not so calm and enjoyable as on the last occasion, and after this we walked along the shore, watching the violet tints on the Arabian mountains gradually giving place to the grey mists of evening. Our Arabs were engaged this day in catching some large bivalves which they found in the rocks at low-water, and extracting the fish from the shells, which they subsequently boiled and ate. During most part of this day I lay in the tent, watching the curling green waves breaking upon the beach, and also did a good deal of reading.

Started at seven the following morning, cheered with the

thoughts of reaching Akabah in a few hours. The shore here winds in and out into sinuous, gravelly bays, richly decorated with shells which tempted me, more than once, to dismount from my camel. About half a mile from the shore is now seen the small island of Kureiyeh, which hardly any traveller of modern times, with the exception of Laborde and Wellsted, has ever visited. And no wonder, for where can a boat be found to take across the enterprising voyager? Laborde constructed a raft of palm wood, binding together with strong cords the trunks of the trees and some branches which he had gathered in Wady Taba. He states that, previous to his visit, no European had set foot on it since the time of the Crusades, and that the Arabs never landed on it. The island is a granite rock, about 300 yards in length, containing the ruins of a mediæval fortress, encompassed by a wall with two gateways. Porter says that 'this is the stronghold of Ailah, mentioned by Abulfeda; its founder is unknown, but in A.D. 1182 it was besieged by Rainald of Châtillon, and resisted all his efforts to gain it. In the time of the Arab historian it was already abandoned.' Laborde, with true French love of display, had taken with him a large flag, which he planted on the highest rock in the island, taking possession of the whole in the name of France in March 1828. The *grande nation* is likely to retain possession of this valuable acquisition for all time to come, seeing that no European flag is ever displayed in this deserted gulf. The valorous Frenchman seems to have made a minute examination of his newly-acquired territory, and gave names

to certain portions of the ruins. These are scattered over two rounded hillocks, of which the island consists, one 50 feet high and the other 150, the two being connected by a flat isthmus. A massive wall, with square towers at each angle, encompasses the ruins; and Laborde, who paced round the island, found its circumference to be about 1,650 feet. He discovered also, in the outer western wall of the bastions, a white stone, covered with an Arabic inscription, which was imperfect and worn away, but the characters seemed to be of the fourteenth century.

Wellsted, who visited the island in January 1833, when on a surveying expedition to the Gulf of Akabah sent out by the East India Company, gives a careful description of the ruins. He landed from one of the Company's vessels which had been driven to the head of the gulf by stress of weather, narrowly escaping destruction off this very island, which he calls 'Jezirat Pharoun,' Pharaoh's Isle. The ruins he describes as follows: 'Round the summit of the northern' (mound) 'is another wall, enclosing a space 360 feet in length and 90 feet in breadth, which approaches occasionally so close to the precipice as to appear merely a continuation of it. Where it remained entire, it was 30 feet in height and 6 feet in thickness. The upper part is turreted, and there are some openings resembling embrasures, as well as numerous loopholes. Within this area the surface of the hill is covered with many square buildings, separated from each other by thick walls. Entering one of these edifices by a

small door in the upper part, we descended by narrow steps to a vaulted chamber, the roof of which was supported by two arches, resting in the centre on a Doric column. This building, and the entrance on the north-eastern side, are of freestone, but the rest of the pile has been rudely constructed of unhewn stones, cemented by a coarse mortar. Scattered amidst the rubbish we found fragments of marble entablatures and pillars, and may thence conclude that these remains occupy the site of some edifice more ancient and costly than the present. The southern hillock presents an undistinguishable mass of ruins. We could find no water on any part of the island; but, on the northern mound, some extensive tanks have, with great labour, been excavated from the rock. On the isthmus which connects the hillocks, there are two rows of small square buildings, having a lagoon extending to them, which, though now choked up with sand, appears to have formerly answered as a harbour. Bedawin tradition ascribes these works to Saladin; but there is reason to believe the station, from the very earliest period, must have been of great importance; for, unless, as in some parts of the Mediterranean, they had artificial harbours at the time this line of communication was adopted, there is no other spot where the bark of the merchant could have found shelter. Should war or pestilence ever intercept the intercourse through Egypt, it may again be necessary to adopt this, the oldest, but now almost forgotten route, in which case Jezirat Pharoun would be invaluable as a coal

depôt.' In a foot-note he adds: 'A Roman road formerly extended from Akabah to Ghaza, and the direct distance between the two seas is only 120 miles.' So much for 'Graia,' as Laborde styles it; 'Jezirat Pharoun,' or Kureiyeh, 'the village,' according to more recent orthography.

We looked wistfully at the picturesque ruins which we had no means of visiting, and passed along the winding shores of the gulf, cheered by the prospect of soon reaching so important a stage in our journey. We now gained the entrance of Wady Tabah, a long valley striking inland in a northern direction, and clothed, in some parts, with tamarisks and palm trees. There is a fine cluster of duom palms round a well at the broad flat mouth of the wady, which we specially noted, as this description of palm is rare in the Sinaitic peninsula. It was blowing very hard when we neared the head of the gulf, the wind coming with unchecked force down the noble Wady Arabah which now lay right before us, stretching away beyond the horizon in one unvarying even sandy plain, bounded on the right by the red mountains of Edom. We reached the extremity of the gulf about eleven o'clock, and passed the rock which marks the frontier line between the territories of the Bedawin of Sinai and those who dwell north of the peninsula. The head of the gulf is a perfectly straight line of strand extending between the two shores, probably about two miles in length. Beyond the narrow strip of gravelly beach is the commencement of the hard sandy plain, reaching to the base of the Tîh Mountains, the end of the Wady Arabah. Here we saw numerous broad

regular tracks, made by the Mecca caravan and the many pilgrims who traverse this route past the fortress of Akabah, whose grey towers we could but faintly descry amid the surrounding palm-groves, which give a delicious aspect of verdure to this sun-scorched, arid spot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHILDREN OF THE DESERT.

THE Gulf of Akabah, along whose shores we have been pursuing our way for some days past, extends from the island of Tiran, at its entrance, where its waters mingle with those of the Red Sea, for nearly 100 miles in a north-eastern direction, until it meets the wide valley of the Arabah. It was called by the ancients the *Sinus Elaniticus*, from the port of Elan at its northern end. The Greeks style it by the name of the Gulf of Elath or Ailah, but it was unknown to Europeans for hundreds of years. All along its sides are precipitous mountains, rising in some parts to the height of 2,000 feet, and the general aspect of its shores is that of sterile magnificence. The Arabs dread its waters on account of the frequent storms which prevail, and no commerce exists along its deserted shores to make it worth while for European vessels to run the risks of its hidden reefs, dangerous currents, and uncertain navigation.

Yet the wealth of the Indies was once conveyed along its dark waters to the port of Ezion-Geber, whose site must have been close to the few scattered houses which constitute

the modern town, or rather village, of Akabah. We read in 1 Kings, chap. ix. 26, 'And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.' (Verse 27.) 'And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.' (Verse 28.) 'And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon.' In 2 Kings, chap. xiv. 22, we read how Azariah, King of Judah, 'built Elath and restored it to Judah;' but it subsequently was taken possession of by the King of Syria, as narrated in the 16th chapter of same Book, v. 6: 'At that time, Rezin, King of Syria, recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath; and the Syrians came to Elath and dwelt there until this day.' After the Greeks and Romans successively occupied the country, it was still a place of commercial importance, and as the cycle of events rolled on, became the seat of an episcopal see, its bishops attending certain councils of the Church. The crusaders held it for a time, Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, having planted a garrison in it in the year 1116; but, after the lapse of fifty years, Saladin once more restored it to the dominion of the Saracens. The sole importance which Akabah now enjoys is from its being a station on the Hâj route to Mecca, and the castle contains a small Turkish garrison of some fifty soldiers and fifteen artillerymen to guard the provisions stored here for the pilgrims. It also serves as a depôt of arms and basis of operations in any military expeditions or

incursions into the Desert. There are also a few tents for the purpose of accommodating travellers from any ports of the Red Sea or other places where cholera prevails, who must here undergo quarantine for ten or twelve days. Of recent years Akabah has been made a quarantine station, and certainly I do not envy those who have to swelter in these wretched little tents, which seemed insufficient in size for even one full-grown person. On first approaching the town it has a pleasing appearance, for the surrounding luxuriant palm-groves, with fertile gardens scattered between, and the towers of the castle, give an air of prosperity to the place, which further acquaintance dispels. You pass beside the gardens to reach the castle, and can look over the rough stone wall which surrounds each inclosure. There is abundance of water, with which the Arabs irrigate their garden plots; the soil is by no means bad, and there is an ample supply of various descriptions of vegetables and fruits. In the centre of each garden I observed a sort of hut, formed of mud and palm branches, where the owner, with his family, seemed to take his ease during the heat of the day; not that they had an idle time of it when we were there, for there was a visitation of locusts during two days of our stay, that kept all hands employed in driving off these destructive creatures. The air was filled with myriads of them, not literally obscuring the sunlight, but in numbers that resembled the fall of a continuous shower of heavy snow-flakes. They fell about our tent, covering the sand and clustering on the palm trees, but specially directing their unwelcome

attentions to the vegetables in the garden. Women and children, with boughs in their hands to beat off the intruders, ran about uttering shrill cries, and they must have been thankful when the strong breeze, which subsequently sprung up, carried their winged tormentors away.

The palm-groves extend along the shore for nearly a mile, and there are several other extensive ones in the vicinity of the town. There is but a narrow strip of beach between the gardens and the sea, and this space seems a favourite spot with the idlers of the garrison and town. In the evening there would generally be one or two fishermen prosecuting their calling with a cast-net; or we would perhaps see some of the inhabitants washing both their clothes and their bodies in the pure waters of the bay. But it is the castle which gives an air of consequence to this remote station in the wilderness, it being the third fortified place on the route to Mecca. The first on the road from Cairo is Ajrud, near Suez; the second, the fortress of Nûkhl, on the great wilderness of Tîh, and then Akabah. It stands somewhat on a rising ground, with the mud houses of the town built close up to its sides, and on the east are ranges of low sand hills, which gradually slope upwards to the lofty mountains bordering the Arabian side of the gulf. The building is square, with walls of alternate bands of red and white stones, strengthened at the corners by towers, and is supposed to have been erected in the sixteenth century. In the centre of the north wall, which is about 30 feet high, is a massive archway admitting to the fortress, with stone divans inside

its thick walls, above which are hung a miscellaneous collection of long rusty flint muskets that had certainly seen their best days. The interior is an open courtyard, round which extends a series of rickety wooden and plaster buildings, with small windows to admit light, formed of bars of wood crossed, thus entirely dispensing with glass. In these miserable dwellings we were told that the wives of the governor, the gunner, and other officials live. At one end of the paved court is a deep well of good water, which supplies the inhabitants and pilgrims; and there are, besides, stowing-places for the corn that is dispensed to the pilgrims. We ascended by a rude staircase to the top of a tower on the north wall, and found there a solitary iron cannon, evidently of great antiquity, and quite unfit for use, mounted on the parapet by way of terrifying the lawless Bedawin who encamp outside the town at certain seasons. Down below in the courtyard there is a more respectable brass cannon, mounted on wheels, which, with the flint muskets in the gateway, constituted the whole armament of this formidable fortress.

Altogether, the normal condition of Akabah is that of a half-deserted Arab town, only without the bustle of those bazaars which give life to one of similar size in Egypt. But when the Mecca caravan comes, with its attendant gay Bedawin escort, mounted on their fleet dromedaries, the prosperous Cairene merchants and gentlemen, dressed in rich silks and armed to the teeth, their harems probably following in gold embroidered, brilliantly-coloured palanquins; the swarms of pilgrims of all classes and ages, from the rich emir, with a

stud of horses, grooms and servants, to minister to his wants, to the miserable, starving dervish, intent on extracting alms from his charitable fellow pilgrims—when all this motley and gaily-dressed crowd surges around the hovels of Akabah, we may well believe the place is in a bustle. Add to this the wild Bedawin, who flock to the town on such occasions to dispose of sheep, butter and milk to the pilgrims, and we may well conceive what a Babel of confusion, noise and shouting the placid waters of the bay will witness. Bartlett, who was fortunate enough to meet the Mecca caravan not far from Akabah on his return from Petra, has given an animated description of it, enriched with one of his beautiful illustrations: 'In front is a crowd of Bedawin, some on dromedaries, some on horses, who wheel about the van of the long procession, displaying their skill in horsemanship by way of amusement. Then comes the main body of the caravan, preceded by a crowd of stragglers from among the lowest class of the inhabitants of Cairo; some on foot, some on donkeys, women even bearing their children on their shoulders, all of whom have set out in blind reliance on the providence of Allah; many of them, alas! destined to fall victims to the immense fatigues of the journey. Next come the rich merchants and retired officials, the aristocracy of Cairo, with numerous attendant camels conveying their ample tents and furnishings, most of them well armed and prepared for any emergency.' Burckhardt mentions that 'in 1816 several grandees from Cairo joined the Hâj, one of whom had 110 camels for the transport of his baggage and

retiuue, and eight tents; his travelling expenses in coming and going must have amounted to 10,000*l.*' The caravan advances five camels abreast. There are in the van cannon drawn by three camels on sledges, each with a soldier on his back; the duty of the latter is to announce the time for halting and starting by gunfire. In the centre come the gay palanquins, containing the fair ones who are in attendance on their lords and masters. Some of these palanquins are 'quite radiant with crimson or green silk, embroidered in gold, surmounted with glittering crescents, and having small windows, latticed without and lined within with looking glass; most of these, on account of the heat, were thrown open, and admitted occasional peeps at the languid, sleepy eyes within.' The sumptuous carriage of the Emir-el-Hadj, who rules over the whole caravan, is near the long string of palanquins; and then comes the central and most important part of the procession, 'the *Mahmal*, or camel selected to convey, under a costly canopy, the copy of the Koran sent to Mecca.' The camel who bears the *Mahmal* is exempt ever after from ordinary labour on account of his precious burden, which 'consists of a square wooden frame, terminating in a pyramidal form, covered with a dark brocade, and highly ornamented with gilt fringes and tassels.'

The journey from Cairo to Mecca occupies about thirty-seven days, and the caravan has to encounter considerable danger from the warlike Bedawin tribes, who frequently endeavour to cut off a part of it by open force. The great object of the wanderers is to acquire the title of Hadji, or

pilgrim, and to have the privilege of wearing a green turban, which only those who have been to Mecca are entitled to display. Arrived at the holy city he has to go through various ceremonies, such as compassing the Kaabeh seven times, and kissing the 'black stone' in each round; but, above all, he must visit Mount Arafât in the afternoon of the ninth of the month of Zul Hady.' Next evening, the pilgrims commence their return, after sunset, to Mecca, having completed the 'ceremonies of the pilgrimage,' says Burckhardt, 'by a sacrifice, part of the flesh of which they eat, and part give to the poor. This is called El-Fida, the ransom, as it is performed in commemoration of the ransom of Is'mael (or Ishmael) when he was about to be offered by his father Abraham; for it is the general opinion of the Muslims that it was this son, and not Isaac, who was to have been sacrificed.'

However, during our stay, everything wore its wonted aspect of wearisome deadness and inactivity. Although there are some 200 inhabitants in the town, we hardly ever saw any of them, except the officials and hangers-on of the governor, who frequented our tents for the purpose of extorting as much as they could out of our dragoman, who had to keep a constant supply of coffee and tobacco going. The whole system, when a party of travellers reach Akabah, is based upon the idea of keeping them as long as possible there, and making extortionate terms for taking them to Petra. It seemed to us that the governor, Sheikh Mohammed, and the soldiers, looked upon us as fair game to be

plundered and fleeced. We reached the grove of palm trees outside the town, in the centre of which our tents were pitched, soon after one o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, March 11. Our arrival was very soon known, and the governor, an elderly Arab, some soldiers from the garrison in Bedawin costume, an Italian clerk or official connected with the quarantine, who gave me a dismal account of the place, and other individuals, dropped in one by one. The governor insisted in honouring us with a guard of five soldiers, for which Achmet had the pleasure of paying handsomely, and these gentry lay at night outside our tent, making themselves scarce during the day, for which we were not sorry. The sheikh's representative was there also, all smiles and amiability, assuring us that his principal would be back to-morrow, when everything would be arranged. So we were much elated at the prospect; and Achmet produced figs, biscuits, coffee and tobacco, with which he regaled our visitors, who made themselves quite at home in his tent, though they mercifully kept outside of ours. The heat all the afternoon was intense, but for a short period at sunset it grew cool, and then again at night was as warm as ever. Very delightful was the evening walk along the margin of the quiet bay, watching the stars come forth, one by one, and the dark palm-groves faintly sighed as the night breeze gently stirred their fan-like branches. It was so clear that the ranges of mountains on both sides of the gulf could be distinctly seen; and no footsteps, save our own, disturbed the calm which hung over the scene. The broad plain of

the Arabah could be faintly distinguished, stretching away in misty indistinctness—that plain which once resounded to the tread of the warlike host of Israel, as they wound along the foot of the mountains of Edom on their return from Kadesh.

Next day was again intensely hot, the thermometer marking 91° in our tent at noon. Achmet was very desponding in the forenoon, as neither Sheikh Mohammed, the governor, nor anyone in authority, made their appearance, without whose co-operation further arrangements could not be made. At last we grew tired of waiting, and getting no reply to sundry messages sent by us, Mr. Ashton and I, with Achmet, went to pay the governor a visit, and found his Excellency sitting at the entrance to the castle, with a select circle of picturesquely-attired attendants round him. He received us most politely, sent for chairs and coffee, and, when we took our seats, all the rest of the party assumed the peculiar Arab sitting position, some crossing their legs, others crouching down in such a position that the weight of the body rested upon the calves of the legs. The chief talking was done by Achmet and the governor's secretary, the great man himself smoking vigorously, but only speaking when appealed to specially by Achmet. Our great object was to find out why the sheikh did not appear, after his agent writing to us that everything would be ready for a start on our arrival at Akabah. All that we could extract was an assurance that it was all right, and that the sheikh would positively come to-day. There was nothing for it but patience, and after examining

the interior of the castle, we returned to our tents little wiser than when we left them. To our great delight, however, shortly after twelve o'clock we were told that the sheikh's brothers were coming; and, sure enough, in a few minutes two grave-looking Arabs rode slowly up on horseback, and it was announced that Mohammed himself would follow. Their costume was picturesque; on their head was the silk *kufiyeh*, which is so folded on the head that one corner hangs back while the other two corners fall over the forepart of the shoulders, the whole fastened round the head by a cord of camel's hair; then the flowing *abba*, striped alternately with white and brown rows, is loosely worn over a white cotton shirt; round their waists were broad belts stuck full of pistols, cartridges, and knives, and seated on horseback the two chiefs had a warlike and imposing appearance. They bore in their hands long spears, with tufts of ostrich feathers near the head, and also possessed rusty flint guns.

When we saw them approaching, we quitted our tent and stood prepared to receive them with the consideration to which such important persons were entitled; in fact, we confounded them with Sheikh Mohammed himself, who did not appear on the scene till some time later. They dismounted when near the tents, planted their long spears in the sand beside their horses, and shook hands with us very cordially, at the same time touching their hearts and pointing to their foreheads. This they did also to the dragoman, the Tawarah sheikh, and others of our party who came up. With

their own particular friends they went through the peculiar ceremony of first touching their heads together gravely and solemnly. Achmet brought out our best rugs, and we all sat down while coffee and pipes were got ready, and the usual ceremonious speeches were made, but of course we could not proceed to real business until Mohammed arrived. True enough, he did shortly after this make his appearance, riding up in a dignified manner on a dromedary, alone and unattended. He is a handsome man, about forty-five years of age, with a resolute face, a clear dark eye, and a neatly-trimmed beard streaked with grey. Bartlett, who saw him at Akabah many years ago, during the lifetime of his father, the notorious Sheikh Hussein, describes him as having 'a look of desert blood and breeding about him, a general delicacy and refinement of appearance, and superior manners; but his full, dark, half-languishing eye, probably a copy of his Arab mother's, somehow or other never would look one in the face.' Stanley also appears to have been favourably impressed with the manners of the then youthful sheikh, and alludes to the 'princely courtesy' with which he treated their party. The sheikh was dressed much like his half-brothers, only that in addition to the handsome yellow silk *kufiyeh* on his head, he wore another round his neck and shoulders, and had on a fine shirt of pink cashmere, or similar soft material, which gave an artistic finish to his costume.

As if by a preconcerted arrangement, the governor, his secretary and staff, now reappeared on the scene, and we all formed quite a small parliament as we sat in a semicircle

under the shade of the palm trees. I could not help specially noticing the truly oriental character of the scene as it appeared from where I sat. The sheikh, with his brothers on either side, their dark flashing eyes half-hidden under the silken head-dress; their followers in full flowing Bedawin costume, well-armed and resolute men; the governor, with his white turban, crimson robe, and yellow turned-up slippers; the Tawarah sheikh in a coarse blue dress, with a voluminous turban on his head, but far inferior in appearance to his brother potentate of the Alawin; our dragoman, the invaluable Achmet, with his dark alpaca loose jacket and full Turkish trousers, a many-hued group, each man presenting different characteristics, and to complete the picture, the three Frank travellers who were the cause of this important conclave being held. But the remarkable accessories of the scene should be also duly noticed—the lofty palm trees, which sheltered us from the sun; the white tents, with the British flag flying in front; the calm waters of the gulf, reflecting an overarching canopy of azure sky in their placid bosom; the shell-strewn strand, stretching away in long sinuous reaches till it was lost in the desert of the Arabah, with the granite ranges of the Sinaitic peninsula swelling proudly upwards from the opposite line of shore.

The debate was long; many pipes were smoked and much coffee drunk, but the result was that to Petra we should go. The very important question of payment did not concern us so much as our dragoman, for we had made our bargain with him at Sinai, in terms of which we merely paid him a

certain specified sum. In fairness to him I do not mention it, for it was, we suspected, inadequate, and would only mislead future travellers, though it seemed to us a considerable amount when first proposed. However, we felt it to be right, at the end of our journey at Beyrout, to present Achmet with an extra amount, which we judged would be sufficient to cover any loss he might have sustained by our Petra expedition. I understood, however, that the sheikh exacted something like 40*l.* for the fourteen days' use we had of fourteen camels and the escort, such as it was; in addition to which there was heavy *backsheesh*, which had to be paid to Sheikh Mohammed for permission to pass through his territories, and also to the sheikh of the Fellaheen at Petra; so that 70*l.* or 75*l.* is the very least which ought to be allowed as the cost of an excursion from Akabah to Wady Mûsa.[1] But the principal part of the monetary transactions with the sheikh was arranged by Achmet in our own tent for the sake

[1] Mr. Ashton, like myself, had difficulty in arriving at the exact cost of our Petra expedition, but his figures nearly coincide with my own: fourteen camels at 14 dollars each; 28*l.* *backsheesh* at Akabah; 15*l.* more *backsheesh* to sheikhs at Petra: altogether little short of 85*l.* Travellers must make up their minds to several days' detention at Akabah. They are looked upon as fair game for plunder on the part of the sheikh, his family, the governor and officials of the garrison, and others. These high and mighty personages have adopted and improved upon a part of the programme of certain of our reformers, for they expect to find in the travellers' tent not only a 'free breakfast-table,' but 'free' luncheons, dinners, suppers, coffee and tobacco. Every exertion should be made to expedite arrangements, and the travellers ought not to let their Tawarah escort leave until matters have been concluded with their new allies. The sheikh should be clearly made to understand that if he does not come to terms at once the travellers will start for Nukhl. Care should also be taken that a proper escort is provided, not a few mere boys and old men such as we had.

of privacy; and the chieftain, I regretted to observe, entirely dropped the grand, dignified manner which became him so well in public, and displayed a keen spirit of avarice which opened our eyes to his true character. It must have been an immense relief to our dragoman, cook, and waiter when the negotiations were finally concluded, because they were obliged to entertain the chief men at both dinner and supper, and our supplies were showing serious symptoms of diminution. Next day there were no signs of preparations for a start; evidently matters were to be allowed to go on quietly; the camels had to be sent for, provisions laid in, and various details attended to. All of this was very irksome, but the traveller is, of course, utterly powerless, as he has placed himself absolutely in the hands of his new allies, for the escort of Tawarah Arabs, who have so faithfully brought us from Suez across the peninsula to this place, beyond which they dare not stir, now take their departure. We were quite sorry when the gentle children of the desert came, one by one, to say good-bye, and to shake us by the hand for the last time. They also seemed sorry to part with us, and were grateful for the trifling presents which we made to each. Last of all the mild sheikh made his farewell salutation, and we greatly regretted that, having never contemplated taking this route, we were unprovided with sufficient money to make an adequate present over and above the stipulated sum which each received from the dragoman. It was with wistful, longing eyes that we watched the small party of Tawarah defile along the shore on their way to their home

in some distant valley, for with them departed our only means of retracing our steps, should that be necessary. However, there was now nothing for it but to trust to the good faith of our new allies, who have never possessed the best of characters for honesty and good government.

Seeing that we are now about to penetrate still farther into the territories of the wild children of the desert, it may not be deemed out of place to give a few particulars of their customs and mode of life. Throughout the great Syrian and Arabian deserts the wandering tribes are scattered, inhabiting sometimes vast districts, perhaps of 40,000 square miles, while some of the smaller tribes may encamp in a remote valley, where are one or two wells of water for their camels and flocks. To attempt to enumerate the names of even the principal tribes would occupy far too great a space in this hasty narrative of travel, therefore the barest sketch of their social economy must suffice. 'The Bedawin,' says Burckhardt, 'may be classed under two different heads; some who, in spring and summer, approach the cultivated parts of Syria, and quit them towards winter, and others who remain the whole year in the vicinity of the cultivated tracts.' The first of those are the Aenezes, the most powerful tribe near Syria, and with their brethren in Nedjid constitute one of the most considerable Bedawin bodies in Arabia. After spending their time in summer near the borders of Syria, seeking pasture and water, they purchase in autumn their wheat and barley for winter, and then seek again their desert homes. Numbering altogether 300,000 or 400,000 souls, they are divided

into numerous subsidiary tribes, and can bring powerful armies into the field if disputes arise between them and the Turkish governors or pashas.

The Bedawin have essentially nomadic habits, for in summer they rarely remain above three or four days in the same spot, just sufficiently long for their cattle to consume all the available herbage. The encampments of tents vary in number from eight or ten to as many hundreds; when few, they are pitched in a circle, and if numerous, in a straight line, or in rows. In winter, however, the whole tribe settles on the plain in groups of three or four tents, with half a mile's interval between each, the sheikh's tent being pitched on the west side of the camp. On the march they proceed as follows: First five or six horsemen ride about four miles in advance to reconnoitre the country; then in the van of the main body come first armed horsemen and camel-riders, 100 yards apart from one another, their line extending along the whole front; then follow the she-camels and their young ones, grazing on any herbage they may pick up on the march; after them the camels bearing the tents, baggage, and provisions; and lastly, the women and children. The men ride indiscriminately amidst the whole body, though generally in front of the line.

As is well known, the Bedawin always dwell in tents, which consist of a covering of black goat's-hair, three-quarters of a yard in breadth, and in length equal to that of the tent; and, as desired, ten or more of these pieces may be stitched together to give due breadth to the tent. There are usually

nine posts to support the roof or covering, three in the middle of the tent and an equal number on either side. For the better stability of the tent and covering, many precautions are taken by stitching pieces of old cloaks or cloth on to the roof, where it receives the tops of the poles, and ropes fastened on to the strongest part of the covering, where it meets the supports, are firmly fixed into the ground outside by stout, short pieces of wood. The tent is divided into two parts, one for the men and the other for the women; the apartment of the former being generally on the left hand as you enter, and that of the women on the right. A thick white woollen carpet of Damascus manufacture, drawn right across the tent, separates the two apartments, which are also carpeted with Persian or Bagdad rugs.

The dress of the Bedawin men is suitable to their wild life. In summer they wear a coarse cotton shirt, over which the wealthy put a long robe of silk, or some rich stuff, but most of them have simply a woollen mantle. Sometimes these mantles, or *abbas*, are of costly materials interwoven with gold. As a rule, the men are almost all barefooted, though they like to sport long large yellow boots, and the *kufiyeh* is very generally worn as a head-dress. In winter a pelisse of sheepskins, stitched together, is worn over the shirt, but it is surprising how hardy in enduring the cold the Arabs are. The women wear a wide cotton gown of a dark colour, blue, brown, or black, while their heads are covered by a kerchief, called a *shauber* or *mekrone*; the younger ladies indulging in gay colours, but the older

women are content with sober black or brown. They are partial to silver rings, both in noses and ears, and wear silver and glass bracelets on the arms, and sometimes those who are rich have silver chains round their necks. Their faces are half-covered with a dark-coloured veil, called *nekye*, which is so tied as to conceal the chin and mouth; like the men, they go barefooted.

Lances are the commonest arms of the Bedawin, some made of wood and others of a light bamboo with many knots, and the shaft is finished off with an iron or steel-pointed head. Sometimes the head is beautifully inlaid with Damascene work of silver or gold; at the other end is a strong iron point, to enable the lance to stick readily in the ground. It is often ornamented with tufts of feathers or strips and fringes of coloured cloth. The lance is thrown, but not to any distance, and only when they are pretty sure of their mark. In addition, the warrior has in his belt generally one or two pistols and the long knife called a *sekeen*. Many of the men also have guns, and some few warriors possess even a coat of mail. Of course, all the tribes have not this amount of offensive weapons, for in some cases clubs of different sorts are carried, some entirely wooden, others of wood with iron heads. Among the Tawarah, for instance, guns were rare, and a long curved rude sword seemed the commonest weapon.

The diet of the Arabs is simple, and they can go through a wonderful amount of fatigue on what we would consider remarkably short commons. They never indulge in luxuries,

except on the occasion of a festival or on arrival of a stranger of distinction, or one whom they wish to honour. Bread is much used, of two sorts, both unleavened; one is baked in round cakes on a plate of iron, and the other way is by making a circle of small stones, over which a fire is kindled; when they are sufficiently heated, the fire is removed and the paste spread over the hot stones, covered with ashes and left till baked. Among the poorer tribes, a coarser cake is made of meal, which has been mixed with water and formed into a circular flat mass, and this is thrust in among the hot embers of a fire and left until it becomes partially baked. when it is taken out and eaten. The *ayesh* is the daily dish with the Aenezes; it is composed of flour and sour camel's milk made into a paste and boiled. Then they use rice and flour boiled with sweet camel's milk, and bread, butter, and dates all mashed up into a paste. Another favourite dish is called *ftita*, an unleavened paste of flour and water baked in hot ashes, and mixed with butter, when the whole is kneaded and served up in a bowl of wood or leather. *Kemmaye* is also a staple article of food; it is a kind of truffle growing in the desert, without any appearance of roots or seeds. If there has been much rain in winter the truffles are found about the end of March; they are about four inches below ground, and the children and servants dig them out with short sticks. The *kemmayes* are boiled in water or milk till they form a paste, over which melted butter is poured, and they are sometimes roasted and eaten with melted butter.

When a stranger arrives, the resources of the Bedawin *cuisine* are taxed to the utmost, for hospitality is one of their well-known good qualities. For a common guest bread is baked and served up with the *ayesh*, and if he is a man of consideration, coffee is prepared, and melted butter forms part of the garnishing of one of the dishes; but for a man of rank, a kid or a lamb is killed. The lamb is boiled with a preparation of wheat and camel's milk, and appears in a large wooden dish, round which the meat is placed, and as an accompaniment, the melted grease of the animal is served up in a wooden bowl, into which each morsel of the meat is dipped before being eaten. It is very rarely, indeed, that a camel is killed, but if it should be, it is cut up into large pieces, some part is boiled, others roasted, and the whole tribe partake of the feast. It cannot be said that the Arabs are specially cleanly in their mode of eating. They certainly wash their hands before dinner, but they do not scruple to thrust the whole hand into the dish before them, and bring out pieces of bread, or some wheat preparation, covered over with the contents of the mess. They breakfast about ten o'clock, and take their supper at sunset, and they do not sit long over their meals. The fair sex are not present on these festive occasions, as they always eat by themselves in their own apartment. Meat is a luxury which they are rarely indulged in by their lords, and the ladies are thought to be well off if they get the head, liver, and legs of the animal, whose daintier parts go to swell the *menu* of the master of the establishment.

The industries of the Bedawin are but few, for their wants are limited to the ordinary requirements of a wandering people. The blacksmith's and saddler's are nearly all the trades they practise, and if we add the arts of tanning and weaving, we about exhaust the small catalogue. The men do the tanning and the women practise weaving with a very simple loom, which stands in front of their apartment. As the Arabs manufacture hardly any articles for sale, their property is of very limited amount, being almost entirely confined to their horses, herds, and camels. No family can exist without one camel at least; he who possesses ten is reckoned poor, thirty or forty places a man in easy circumstances, and the man is rich who is the owner of sixty camels. Some sheikhs of the Aenezes have as many as 300 camels. Horses are comparatively scarce among the Bedawin, one mare to six or seven tents is a common allowance; the mare is usually ridden, for the male colts are sold to the peasants and townspeople in Syria. Unlike civilised nations, the Arabs are not actuated by mere considerations of what wealth a man possesses in according to him honour and influence. A hospitable poor man, who kills a lamb for the stranger, gives coffee to those present, and shares his plunder among his poor relations, is much more esteemed than a rich miser, who neglects his poor friends and turns from the stranger; the wealthy sheikh lives like his poor neighbour, eats the same dishes, and only partakes of a luxury when a guest arrives.

If the arts are little cultivated, it may be supposed that

science finds few followers amongst these wild tribes. In many tribes not one person can read or write. They have a slight smattering of medical learning, and know accurately enough the names of the stars and planets, though of the laws by which these are governed they are entirely ignorant; of poetry and music they are fond, and they have their national songs and dances. Till recent times the Bedawin had but little religious belief, but since they became converted to the Wahaby faith in the beginning of the century, a few priests have been introduced by certain sheikhs, who instruct the young to write in some instances. The Wahaby religion may be described as a purer Islamism, for the founder of the faith, a learned Arabian named Abd-el-Wahab, had visited various principal schools of teaching in the East, and became convinced that the religion founded by Mahomet had become totally corrupt. His efforts were directed to reform abuses in the followers of Islam and to disseminate the pure faith among the Bedawin, who, although nominally Mussulmans, were utterly indifferent to religion or its obligations. The Koran and the traditions of Mahomet are acknowledged to be fundamental, as comprising the laws of their faith, and the opinions of the best commentators on the Koran are respected. The Wahabys declared that all men were equal in the eyes of God, that even the most virtuous could not intercede with him, and that it was sinful to invoke the aid of departed saints. The Aenezes are punctual in their daily prayers, and observe the feast of Ramazan with great strictness; but among our Tawarah

and Alawin escorts I saw no instances of prayer being attempted.

Polygamy is rare amongst the Bedawin, but few have two wives. The marriage ceremony is very simple among the Aenezes. When a man desires to marry a girl, he sends a friend of the family to her father and the girl's wishes are ascertained, for she is not compelled to marry against her inclination. If she agrees, the friend, then holding the father's hand, says aloud that he understands that he is willing to give his daughter in marriage to her suitor, when the father answers in the affirmative. The wedding-day is fixed, and the bridegroom brings a lamb to the tent of the girl's father and cuts its throat before witnesses; as soon as the blood falls upon the ground, the marriage ceremony is regarded as complete, and the bride is by-and-by conducted to her new home. The knot being so easily tied, unfortunately is loosened without much scruple, for divorces are of frequent occurrence. If an Arab becomes dissatisfied with his wife, he separates himself by simply saying, 'Thou art divorced,' and giving her a she-camel, sends her back to her family. He is not obliged to state any reasons, nor does this reflect particularly on the discarded wife's honour; the husband is excused by his friends saying he did not like her. There have been instances of Arabs, not more than forty-five years of age, who were known to have had above fifty different wives; in fact, whoever will be at the expense of a camel may divorce as many wives as he pleases. The wife also can use the privilege of divorce in a somewhat

modified form. If she is unhappy, she can fly for refuge to her kindred, and if the husband uses force to induce her to return, her family would resent this violence. He may revenge himself by withholding the words of divorce, so that the woman cannot marry again. Of this class there are a large number, but old maids are unknown amongst the Bedawin. If the husband dies, his brother generally offers to marry his widow, but neither are forced by custom to enter into matrimony. A man has the exclusive right to the hand of his cousin, though he is not obliged to marry her; still, without his consent, she cannot accept a husband.

Women are regarded amongst the Bedawin as inferior to men, and, though not neglected, they are always taught to consider that their chief business is cooking and working. An unmarried girl enjoys much more consideration than a married woman; once married she becomes a mere drudge, occupied all day, while her husband is lolling at ease and smoking his pipe. The women have to fetch the water, a laborious operation often, and the unmarried girls, among the Arabs of Sinai, drive the herds to pasture. They watch the sheep all day, and if a man of the tribe passes they offer him a drink of milk or water. On most occasions, however; if a stranger passes, the women turn their backs upon him, nor will they receive anything from his hands unless some friends be present. The old women are, however, treated with great reverence and respect by their children, but the relations between fathers and their grown-up sons are often very bad. In many tribes slaves perform the more menial

offices of the family, and most wealthy sheikhs possess some of them. After a lapse of time the slaves are emancipated and married to persons of their own colour.

Hospitality is certainly one of the Bedawin virtues, though it often proceeds from vanity and a desire of distinguishing themselves among their equals in the tribe. A helpless traveller may go the whole way between Mecca and Damascus, and he can safely enough trust to the hospitality of the wild tribes he may encounter. A hungry Bedawin will always divide his scanty meal with a stranger, though he may have no means of procuring a fresh supply. When a stranger enters an Arab encampment he alights at the first tent on his right hand, for if he passed that tent its owner would consider himself to be slighted. Among the Arabs of Sinai the custom is that the stranger is the guest of the first person who descries him from afar. Sometimes serious quarrels arise as to who has the right to entertain a visitor; in the absence of the husband, his wife invariably receives and entertains strangers, assisted by a male relation, who does the honours. Some tribes of the Arabs permit the women to drink coffee with strangers on their arrival, provided the owner of the tent be present. Amongst those tribes who are continually exposed to the passage of strangers, it must be confessed that hospitality can only be purchased by money, and on the Hâj route little mercy is shown to pilgrims in distress. The influx of foreign manners has done a good deal towards impairing the ancient virtues of the Arabs who live on the borders of Syria.

The principles of government among the wandering children of the desert are based upon ancient custom from time immemorial, and their civil institutions are well adapted to their habits and mode of life. Every Arab tribe has its chief sheikh, and every camp is headed by its own sheikh, or principal man, but he has no actual authority over the individuals of his tribe. The real government of the Bedawin consists in the separate strength of their different families, who, by their own individual weight and influence, maintain an even balance in the entire body social of each tribe. If a dispute arises between two individuals, the sheikh endeavours to settle the matter, but if the relations of the parties fail, aided by the sheikh's influence, in making peace, then commences war between the whole kindred and families of either disputant. The prerogative of the sheikh consists in leading his tribe against the enemy, in conducting negotiations for peace or war, after consulting with the chief men of the tribe, in fixing the spot for encampments, and in entertaining distinguished strangers. He derives no yearly income from his tribe or camp; on the contrary, he is obliged to support his title by considerable disbursements; he must maintain the poor and divide his presents amongst his friends. He derives a certain income from the tribute he exacts from the Syrian villages and his emoluments from the Mecca pilgrim caravan. When a sheikh dies he is succeeded in his dignity by one of his sons, or his brother, or some relation distinguished for valour and liberality, but not invariably. Sometimes a stranger to the family may be

chosen, and occasionally, during the lifetime of the sheikh he may be deposed from his dignity.

There exists in some tribes an official called the *kady*, or judge, who is selected from men respected for their age, intelligence, and love of justice. They wear no special dress, and have no written code of laws to refer to, but they receive considerable fees and emoluments. A still higher judge is the *mebesshae*, of whom there is one in every principal tribe, for deciding in cases of great difficulty. The punishments inflicted are invariably pecuniary fines, according to the nature of the offence, and as the amount of these is well known and dreaded, this has a wholesome effect upon the unruly spirits of a tribe. The laws of inheritance among the Arabs are those prescribed by the Koran, and on a man's death his property is divided among the male children in equal shares. His effects are known to the whole tribe, and if he leaves children under age, the next relation takes them under his care.

The law of blood revenge is one terrible peculiarity which characterises these strange children of nature. In theory it is, that whoever sheds the blood of a man owes blood on that account to the family of the deceased. But not only is blood claimed from the actual homicide, but from all his relations, and this right is never lost; it descends on both sides to the latest generations. Sometimes the feud is healed by a certain fixed price of blood being stipulated to be paid to the nearest relations of the slain person. In consequence of a single murder, it is sometimes necessary to

remove many hundred tents, and the fugitives move from one tribe to another for more than fifty years, until at length a compromise is made. For those slain in wars between two tribes, the price of blood is required from the persons who were known to have actually killed them. Appeals are sometimes made to the *mebesshae*, to settle by whom a man may have been killed in battle if the accused denies the charge.

Such are a few outlines of the character and peculiar usages of the Arabs of the great Syrian and Arabian deserts, which have been almost entirely derived from the comprehensive work of Burckhardt upon the 'Bedouins and the Wahabys.' It is of course only by long intercourse with the tribes whom the traveller comes across, that he learns any particulars of their mode of life or is admitted to their friendship, and no one hurriedly passing through their territories, as we did, can ever expect to see much of the mode of life pursued among the Bedawin. Still it is a great advantage that we can derive, from the works of some distinguished oriental travellers, such full and interesting details as have been gathered together of the manners and customs of the nomade tribes of Arabia.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EASTERN ROUTE TO PETRA BY WADY ITHM.

We had now been four days doing nothing at Akabah, for there is really no way of passing the time profitably there, partly from there being hardly any traces of the ancient port of Ezion-Geber to examine, and owing to the great heat which prevails it is impossible to walk much during the day. The thermometer stood at 103° in the tent, a degree of heat which utterly incapacitates most Europeans from active exertion; lolling about the tent-door, under the shade of some palm trees, and watching any movements on the part of the Arabs who constantly hovered about our camp, was the most we could do. One day we saw the curious practice of impregnating the female palm tree, by means of fastening a bunch of the male seed to a branch exposed to the wind, which disseminates it over the blossoms. It is necessary to do this to enable the palm tree to bear fruit, but in most places it is found sufficient to plant a single male among several female date trees. They have a very primitive mode also of obtaining water for the camels to drink, simply by scooping some holes in the sand close to the sea, and after standing for a little,

the water which gathers in them is sufficiently fresh for drinking purposes. But we grew very tired of our inaction, and were rejoiced when at last, about half-past eight on the morning of Friday, March 15, we slowly defiled from the shady palm-groves of Akabah. We found our new escort by no means so tractable or well up to their work as our Tawarah friends. In fact Achmet and his two trusty officials, Ali and the cook, did most of the work this morning in the way of striking the tents and loading the camels, for our escort were smoking, wrangling and shouting, with little regard to our interests.

Our party was rather an imposing one as we defiled across the plain, and excited some attention on the part of the assembled crowd of townspeople who saw us off. Our sheikh rode at the head of the cavalcade with his two brothers, all armed with long guns and pistols in their belts; those three all wore some article of dress of a red colour, apparently signifying their rank. The sheikh's wife and his little boy Hassan, of whom he seemed very fond and proud, also joined our party. We were told that there had been no traveller to Petra for three years past, so that we may consider ourselves fortunate in having been allowed to proceed there. A much greater privilege was the fact of our being able to take the Eastern route by way of the Wady-el-Ithm, Laborde's route, which has been hardly ever traversed by any one since his time. A recent matrimonial alliance between Sheikh Mohammed's sister and the ruler of the territory of the Wady Ithm enabled the former to guarantee us a safe passage. After holding along the sloping plateau which extends from

Akabah in a north-western direction, we reached in the course of an hour the entrance of the narrow pass which leads to Edom. This is the way along which the Israelites must have passed on their way to Moab, and in ancient times it was the main approach from Elath to Petra. Stanley and all recent travellers took the road up the broad Wady Arabah, down which the Israelites came on their return from Kadesh, and which runs in a northerly course until it meets the waters of the Dead Sea. Near the entrance of the wady we passed a massive stone wall, three yards in thickness, with an opening for the winter's torrent to pass through, which is supposed to have been erected by the Bedawin as a defence against intruders. At mid-day we found that we were nearly 2,000 feet above the sea level, so steadily and continuously had we ascended. On either side of the valley the mountains rise very precipitously, and the bed of the wady is composed of granite gravel washed away from the cliffs. Grey granite is the prevailing character of rock, streaked sometimes perpendicularly, but occasionally obliquely and horizontally, with veins of different-coloured porphyry or basalt. These streaks vary in colour from chocolate, red brown, and black, and are not often more than 15 or 20 feet broad, but they impart a very distinctive character to the scenery. The rocks have a peculiar earthy, friable look about them, not the glistening, solid, adamantine appearance of the Sinaitic group. We lunched near a lofty mountain, Jebel Badry by name, and had to endure the persecution of thousands of the common house-flies, so familiar to

Europeans, which had followed us from Akabah, and whom we did not shake off for some days. These flies were another of the annoyances we suffered at Akabah, which had almost escaped my memory.

We continually ascended the Wady Ithm all this day, and were struck with its uniformly sterile and desolate nature. Though this was once a great highway of commerce, it would be found extremely difficult now to convey merchandise over its rock-strewn defiles. What pavement may once have existed has long since been swept away by the torrents of ages, and there are hardly any trees at all to be met with, while water is almost unknown. The masses of accumulated *débris* on both sides of the valley are very regular in their formation, in many places looking like a railway embankment. The sides of the torrent's bed are also singularly scarped away, in some places being as perpendicular as a wall, and in height at least 25 or 30 feet, thus showing the resistless force of the angry torrent. Our camping-ground was about 3,000 feet above the sea, an extensive undulating plain called Holden Saardeh, with those lofty streaked granite mountains on all sides. Somewhere near this must be the watershed between the Wady Arabah and the interior of Edom. There are many small shrubs and prickly acacia trees about this spot, but we saw no water. Next morning my camel was found to have strayed away during the night, and could nowhere be seen, so I had to ride the sheikh's horse for some hours this morning, until I got another camel. About 9.30 A.M. we saw upon the

mountain side the remains of a ruined fort, with a stone wall round it, called by the Arabs El Khaldeh, which, however, we did not stop to examine. The valley hitherto had been of the same steep rocky character, but now it opened out to a great plateau, perhaps four miles across, and surrounded by high mountains streaked with veins of porphyry in a horizontal direction, much darker and broader than we had hitherto seen. Small wadys opened out from the mountains on to this plateau, along one of which our road lay. This wady presently expanded into a broad level plain, with quantities of small shrubs growing about, and also a good many trees were to be seen. One of these, which has a smooth grey trunk and light feathery branches without leaves, is called by the Arabs the *ghaza* tree. The mountains slope upwards from the plain, but are not nearly so high as those which we passed yesterday, and we seem to be leaving the granite ranges and returning to the sandstone formation, but the broad-coloured streaks are still seen. We continue in the Wady-el-Ithm, which now gets broader and broader, apparently one uniform level plain of interminable length, for we can actually see in the far distance the great range of Mount Seir. On our right hand, due east, we observe the lofty towering peak of Jebel Rum, shaped like a vast cone, and standing isolated from the mountain chains. Those distant mountains are in the Wady Hesmeh, or Red valley, which is inhabited by a powerful tribe called the Beni Sakhr, who are not on good terms with the Alawin, and our valorous escort were in considerable trepidation for the next day or two.

That afternoon we passed the entrance to Wady Mursad, a broad sloping valley running into Wady Ithm, and it was here that I would be inclined to place the watershed. The Wady Ithm slopes gradually to the east, and the water must flow from it to the Wady Hesmeh, instead of south, to the Gulf of Akabah. The plain along which we traversed is of pure sand, without stones, and quantities of plants and shrubs grow in it. One plant is very green, just like very large parsley, or rather wild carrot; this the Arabs call *kalk*. Saw several wild flowers also, one of them very like the 'forget-me-not' in everything except colour.

Our camping-ground that night was called El Guerrah. It is a large isolated mass of sandstone rock, curiously coloured with veins of red and brown, almost as if painted by the hand. Looking from it across the broad plain, we saw a number of singularly-shaped masses of rock rising out of the level surface, like islands in the sea; also many of the mountains are of similar formation, regular layers of rock of different colours placed one above another, the other portions being grey sandstone. Sheikh Mohammed took his departure from us this day, after specially introducing to our favourable notice another half-brother, who was to see us safe to Hebron. His two brothers, who accompanied him from Akabah, also left us, so we were considerably shorn of our splendour, and our whole escort were a few boys, one or two old men, and the brother of the sheikh. The Alawin are a powerful tribe, but we certainly were favoured with very poor specimens of them. They consist of the following subordinate tribes, so our

dragoman informed us: Ley Diarmeth (the sheikh's family name), Aboloseban, Lamran, and Lahowetath. They seem to keep to their rocky fastnesses, for we did not meet a human being all the five days' journey between Akabah and Petra, except one old man, who encountered us a day's march from the latter place.

We remained over the Sunday at El Guerrah, which is an interesting spot to stop at. Our tents were pitched in front of the isolated mass of strangely-coloured rock before mentioned, which in many parts has the curiously-carved look of the rocks near Hazeroth. The day was very hot, so we remained in the tent until the afternoon, when I took a walk along the plain. All was very still and lifeless, and the great sandy plain, with its islands of rock rising afar off amid the interminable level expanse, suggested solemn thoughts of the immutable desolation which reigns around. Thus slowly wandering on in tranquil reverie, I was led farther away than I intended, and observed at a little distance what looked like the extensive ruins of a fortress. Mr. Ashton, who had been climbing the rocks at the back of our tents, presently came up, he having discovered the same object which attracted my attention. We walked to the ruins, and first of all came upon a courtyard, or outer hall, its four walls of large stones being carefully put together without mortar. In height they were barely a yard, and in width may have been a yard and a half. The area was all round, and measured 100 feet by 70, and this court faced the east. At the right-hand corner, on entering from the plain,

there was an opening about 12 or 15 feet wide, leading in a north-east direction for nearly a hundred yards, as may be traced by the remains of its walls. Beyond the outer court, whose inner wall was not so wide as the others, intervened a vacant space, and then came a quadrangular building, apparently once a strong fortress, for we observed distinct traces of towers at each angle. The walls, whose remains are nearly 20 feet in height, are mere masses of *débris*, but they must have been of great thickness, for some of the stones, on whose sides chisel marks may be detected, are 3 or 4 feet long. This building too seems to have been constructed without mortar, and though it is now only a vast heap of stones, it must have been of great strength originally. Its interior may be about 70 feet square, and we examined the stones carefully to find any trace of inscription or writing on them, but without success. No doubt this temple fortress must be of great antiquity, but there is little to indicate the epoch at which it was built.

Next day we encountered a regular sandstorm, which gradually obscured the face of heaven and filled the air with clouds of fine dust, rendering locomotion most unpleasant. After marching for two hours, we turned aside to examine a rocky mass of red sandstone called Harabah, in which is a curious chamber cut in the rock. The entrance is by a steep groove chiselled in the rock, with distinct remains of steps cut across it, and is partially covered over by a large slab of stone. The slope of the passage is about 7 or 8 feet in length, and the chamber measures 30 feet by 18, the bottom

being covered with sand. The upper portion of the rock-hewn walls is covered with a coarse surface of plaster, and deep pick marks indent the face of the stone. Light is admitted by a circular hole in the roof, where the rock is between 2 and 3 feet thick. The height of this curious chamber is about 6 feet, but the sand had evidently also accumulated to nearly that extent in the interior. Near the hole in the roof is a channel half a foot deep, apparently to prevent the rainwater from flowing into the chamber, and after a course of about 20 feet the water is discharged into a small open cistern. On both sides of the entrance to the cave are inscriptions of the Sinaitic character, but much worn and defaced, the stone being very soft. It is difficult to say whether this chamber has been a tomb, a cistern, or a hermit's cave, but it is very likely to have been one of the dwellings of the Horites.

Proceeding on our journey we were now enveloped in clouds of fine dust, with a tremendous wind blowing in our faces, until we reached the very extensive remains of Humeiyŭmeh, or, as Laborde calls it, Ameimé. These ruins cover a vast extent of ground, and we wandered for more than two miles amidst masses of stones. Although the remains are very extensive, yet they exhibit no traces of architectural splendour, and the dwelling-houses seem to have been mainly constructed with a view to storing provisions and water, judging by the great numbers of cisterns everywhere to be met with. This place must have been a great rendezvous or *entrepôt* for all the caravans traversing

this important commercial route. I came first upon an immense tank or pool, about 100 feet long by 60 broad, the walls which enclosed it being built of large stones, most regularly placed in an unbroken line, 3 feet in height and the same in width. Half a mile farther on were the foundations of a very large building, of which the outer wall could be distinctly traced. The court which it enclosed was extensive, about 250 yards across. At the north-west corner was a very distinct and complete reservoir for water, which is sunk 6 or 8 feet below the level of the ground and regularly cemented with mortar. At each corner of the walls is a kind of angular niche, partially covered over; in length this cistern is about 96 feet and in breadth about 45 feet. We had but little time to examine the extensive masses of stones and *débris*, or the mounds of earth scattered about, which, doubtless, covered ancient buildings, forming the ruins of this once prosperous city. On leaving the spot we could trace for nearly three miles the remains of the ancient aqueduct, which keeps exactly to the level of the ground, and conveyed the water from the wells of Gana to these great reservoirs.

Beyond this, to the west, the ground suddenly sinks in the most remarkable and entirely unexpected manner. You are traversing a level plain when, all at once, a deep precipitous fissure or cliff yawns directly across the path, and conducts to still more extensive chasms that run right into the heart of the mountains. Those strange ravines or natural cuttings seem to lead into scenery of an entirely new character, and I

regret exceedingly that we did not attempt to explore some of them. I am convinced, judging from the glimpse which we could get of those tremendous precipices and gorges, that the enterprising explorer would be richly rewarded; but our Arabs were evidently in fear of encountering enemies, and would not have listened to a divergence from our route. I merely throw out this hint for the guidance of future travellers. We now got among a succession of narrow valleys, presenting no special feature of interest, and the intolerable dust and high wind combined to make our journey that afternoon anything but agreeable. We encamped in a wild defile called El Seblehyeh, about 4,200 feet above the sea level, and had the utmost difficulty in getting our tent pitched. About five o'clock it commenced to blow harder than ever, and presently we had pouring rain and a great deal of thunder and lightning. Our route next day was entirely among the mountains which form the outskirts of the ranges round Petra, and which are of an entirely different character from those we have hitherto encountered. They are not lofty or precipitous, their round sides are well clothed with soil and grass in many parts. Many shrubs are to be seen, and there can be little doubt that formerly abundant pasture was found here. We passed a very old well called Beer Hammad, with water in it at a depth of 20 feet from the uppermost stones of the walls. Many of the stones have fallen in, and on some of the larger ones we observed deep grooves made by the old ropes working up and down ages ago. There are some Sinaitic inscriptions

on a large stone near the top, but of a very rude character. We found a charming spot for lunch in Wady Hammad, a bank of green grass, with a clear spring of water welling on to the turf, which more nearly approaches in character the soft sward of England than any we have yet seen. It was quite delightful to lie and loll upon the grass, enjoying the sunshine, which was now considerably tempered by the cool breezes that play about these mountain sides. There are many remains of cultivation in the soil near this well, as though the Arabs had apparently taken advantage of the water for irrigating purposes. In some places we came upon remains of buildings, but so utterly ruinous that there was no making out what they were.

That afternoon we began to ascend rapidly a part of the great range of Seir, and as we mounted higher and higher it grew very cold. At four o'clock we gained the extreme ridge of the mountain which we had been ascending, and a grand view burst upon our sight. In front were the remarkable serrated rugged rocks which surround Petra, while to the west there was a most extensive view of the vast plain of Arabah on our left, while, far beyond, lay the desert of Tîh and the wilderness of sand which stretches to the Mediterranean. In the immediate foreground is the singular plateau of rocks, of every variety of colour, intersected by deep chasm-like gorges, which run into the mountains within whose hollow recesses is situated the rock-hewn capital of Edom. A wonderful agglomeration of ravines and cliffs it is, and it seems incredible that a great commercial city

could once have flourished in such a terrific solitude. From our commanding altitude, between 6,000 and 7,000 feet above the sea, we looked right down upon this rocky configuration. But the most striking feature was the great double peak of Mount Hor, the sacred mountain where the High Priest of the Israelites was gathered to his fathers, and the theatre of such stirring scenes as were here enacted. Its identity is well authenticated, and it forms a most conspicuous landmark from the plains surrounding the range of Mount Seir. On our right is the immense plain of Arabia Petræa, a gently undulating expanse of sand, reaching almost to the distant Euphrates. What a majestic history gathers round these tremendous rocks, how many powerful nations have dwelt amidst their secret defiles, what riches have been poured into the long-deserted city which now gives shelter only to the owl, the raven, and the hyæna!

Though the Arabah and wilderness beyond were enveloped in a dim blue haze, and the golden sunshine still lingered upon the lofty summit of Mount Hor, a cold wind blew round the peaks which we were now crossing, all the more chilling after the great heat of the last few days. We now descended rapidly, passing a large tank or reservoir, 45 feet square and 12 feet deep, constructed of very massive stones, into which a beautiful pure stream of water emptied itself. Quantities of maiden-hair fern grew upon the walls and a few trees were scattered about. We were glad to reach the shelter of our tent, pitched at a spot called Bais amidst masses of ruined walls, and to get out of the cutting

blast which whistled amidst the rocks. The thermometer stood at 52° in the tent, rather a contrast to the temperature of Akabah. Next morning we made an early start, and it was the most disagreeable weather we had yet encountered. A thick raw mist, as moist and chilling as any that I had ever experienced in Scotland, enveloped everything in a damp shroud of vapour, which entirely concealed all the noble features of the strange scenery through which we passed. We need not have been so expeditious in our movements, but were anxious to get as early as possible to Petra, before the news of our arrival had spread amongst the Fellaheen. The poor little boys, barefooted and miserably clad, trudged uncomplainingly along at our side, and Achmet sat silent on his dromedary, muffled up in a thick fur-lined cloak which he had purchased at Cairo. After a while, however, the welcome sun's rays began to light up the distant desert of Edom, and as the sunshine brought out still more of the deep gloomy defiles and awful crags round Petra, while part was still shrouded in mist, the effect was remarkably fine. We kept along the high ridges overlooking this strange rocky table-land, and which gradually slope downwards till they meet the platform of rocks. The soil covering them is well clothed with grass and shrubs, and occasionally trees of the cedar tribe are met with. The rocks below are of a bright red colour, with streaks of orange and green sometimes running across them, while the deep clefts before mentioned seamed their surface in all directions. We frequently passed fertile patches of cultivated ground, terraced with rough

stone walls, and covered with grain more than a foot high. In some places there were springs of water, which are used for irrigating purposes by the owners of the fields. No doubt, in ancient times all these mountain slopes and sheltered valleys below were richly cultivated, but the curse of the prophet Ezekiel still seems to cling to the spot. Still keeping to the high ground, we at last, about ten A.M., saw below us the entrance to the far-famed Wady Mûsa, the Arab name for Petra, while far up on a mountain side, a long way off, we descried the black tents of an extensive encampment of Bedawin, from whom we might earnestly hope to be delivered. On our extreme right, at the upper end of the Wady Mûsa, is the village of Eljy, substantially enough built of stone and surrounded by fertile fields of grain. We are thus within half an hour of Petra, which we have come so far to see, and a few words as to its history may not be out of place.

Arabia Petræa is one of the three great divisions of Arabia, and is bounded on the north by Judæa, on the south by the Red Sea, and on the west by Egypt; its appellation 'rocky' is derived from the geological character of the country. The Greek authors knew little about it. Diodorus mentions that it is a territory of rocks, with few springs, and almost inaccessible to the outer world. Pliny and Strabo both allude to it, the former stating that the 'Nabatæi inhabit a city called Petra, in a hollow somewhat less than two miles in circumference, surrounded by inaccessible mountains, with a stream running through it. It is distant

from the town of Gaza, on the coast, 600 miles.' Strabo speaks in similar terms regarding it, mentioning that it is fortified with a barrier of rocks, has excellent springs of water, and that outside the city the country is desert. There is little doubt that it was the Idumea of the ancients, the Edom of the Bible, where it is often also styled Mount Seir, or 'Rugged.' Edom is continually mentioned in the books of Moses, and very minute descriptions are there given of its inhabitants, their manners, territories, and power. Its first inhabitants were the Horites, 'Dwellers in caves,' who were driven out by Esau. King David conquered Edom, and Solomon built his fleet at its port, Ezion-Geber. Subsequently the Edomites regained their independence, but were again subdued by the Maccabees. After this the Nabatheans established themselves in Edom in the third century B.C., and the country afterwards became known as Arabia Petræa. The Nabatheans were an Arab tribe descended from Nebaioth, Ishmael's eldest son, and were a commercial people, carrying the products of India and Arabia across the territory of Sinai to the Mediterranean. The caravans all centred at Petra, from whence again the trade branched out to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. Petra was a place of great strength in the time of the Romans, by whom the country was finally subdued, A.D. 105. Pompey marched against it, but desisted from the attack, and Trajan afterwards besieged it. Many Romans settled there, and no doubt changed greatly the customs and usages of the inhabitants. Josephus has many notices of Arabia Petræa and its rulers. Antigonus, one

of Alexander's successors, after reducing Syria and Palestine, sent an expedition against Petra, and succeeded in surprising the city, but was himself afterwards driven out with great loss. To the period of the Roman occupation we owe the magnificent monuments of Petra, which were the results of the accumulation of wealth that its great trade brought to the city. Christianity spread as far as this remote city, which was established as the metropolitan see of Palestina Tertia. For some time after the kingdom of the Nabatheans became a Roman province it preserved its splendour, but by degrees its trade fell off, and the glories of the capital inevitably decayed. The trade of the Persian Gulf forsook the Red Sea and began to follow the course of the Euphrates to Palmyra, which in time became so magnificent a city. Alexandria had become also a great centre of commerce between the East and the West, the ports of Berenice and Coptos on the Red Sea received the merchandise of India, from whence it was conveyed by caravans to the Nile. Altogether, by the time of the seventh century Petra is scarcely mentioned by the Arabian authors as amongst the conquests of the Mahommedans. For a very brief period the crusaders held possession of Edom, in whose fastnesses they built one or two fortresses, which gave them the command of the caravan route from Damascus to Mecca. The Saracens, however, made vigorous efforts to dislodge the invaders, and ere long had subdued the whole region with its strongholds. From this time it disappears from notice, having gradually come under the sway of the wandering tribes who now hang about

the outskirts of Wady Mûsa, and whom the traveller will find a most troublesome, rapacious set of Arabs, little better than savages.

To Burckhardt belongs the honour of being the first traveller in modern times who penetrated to the long-lost city, with its wealth of noble monuments. He had heard of the reports, collected by Seetzen in 1807, of extensive monumental remains existing in the rocky fastnesses of Edom, and he encountered considerable risks in penetrating to the ruins of Petra. He assumed the name of Sheikh Ibrahim, and, dressed as a poor Arab, made his way from Damascus across the desert to the Dead Sea, and thence penetrated by the mountains of Edom to the village of Eljy, and on August 22, 1812, entered Petra by the wonderful gorge called the Sîk. Burckhardt passed through Eljy, accompanied by his guide, who carried the goat which the traveller intended to sacrifice on Mount Hor in honour of Aaron. He describes the town as surrounded with vineyards and fruit trees, the grapes being especially fine, and are sold by the inhabitants in quantities to the Arabs. Traces of an ancient city were observed by Burckhardt from the large stones scattered about, showing that its fine natural situation had attracted the former inhabitants of Wady Mûsa. He was pressed by his guide to sacrifice the goat at a spot up the mountain side from whence Mount Hor is visible, this being the place where all the Bedawin offer their oblations, thinking it quite sufficient to be within sight of the High Priest's tomb. It being his object, however, to pass through

the ruins of Petra, he said that he had vowed to kill the animal at the very tomb itself, and so gained his point. He knew that his guide was watching him with suspicion, thinking that he might be in search of treasures which the Arabs believe to be hidden in the celebrated Khuzneh, the most beautiful temple in Petra. It is most remarkable how he managed to bring away so accurate a description of the ruins, considering that he never ventured to take a single note in presence of his guide. After reaching the plain at the foot of the mountain, the goat was hurriedly sacrificed, it being too late to ascend to the tomb itself.

Now that the Arabs have become used to the industrious researches of modern travellers, Petra has been thoroughly examined, the most beautiful temples and tombs painted and photographed, and the ruins carefully planned and described. The next travellers who succeeded in penetrating to the famous city were Messrs. Banks, Legh, Irby and Mangles, who, after much opposition, entered it in 1818, and published an accurate account of what they saw. Ten years afterwards, in March 1828, M. Léon de Laborde and M. Linant entered Petra by the Wady Arabah, passing Mount Hor, and traversing the route by which we left the ruins. Laborde travelled in great state and had a large escort of Arabs, so that they were able to bring away a number of beautiful sketches and an accurate plan of the ruins. He it was who first visited the noble rock-hewn temple, called El Deir, which, however, Irby and Mangles had seen from the summit of Mount Hor, though they were unable to reach it on

account of its inaccessible position, remote from the ruins of the city. Laborde's elaborate work is well known, and his drawings, as well as those of Bartlett and Roberts, give an admirable representation of those wonderful monuments. Miss Martineau, Dr. Robinson, Dean Stanley, and many others have visited and published their accounts of Petra, and they all appear to have entered the city from the west, but I would strongly recommend future travellers to take our route from Akabah by the Wady Ithm, and make their entrance by the Sîk valley. The effects of its astonishing rocks rising up hundreds of feet from a narrow cleft, hardly half a dozen yards across in many places, the magical colouring and fantastic forms of the perpendicular sides, the subdued light in this deep ravine; above all, the extraordinary beauty of the famous Khuzneh, which bursts upon your gaze at the eastern end of the Sîk, produce an irresistible impression upon the mind of the traveller.

Many attempts have been made to connect Petra with Kadesh, where the Israelites abode some days, and from whence the spies went to examine the Promised Land. It was a very important resting-place of the host of Israel; for there occurred the rebellion of Korah, the angry demand of the people for water, and Miriam and Aaron both died in this place. They had wandered from Sinai over the desert of the Tîh, or 'wilderness of Paran,' thence descended into the Arabah, or 'wilderness of Zin,' and upon the refusal of the King of Edom to allow them to pass through his territory, they proceeded to Ezion-Geber, and so circumvented the

kingdom of Edom and entered Moab. Stanley inclines to the belief that Kadesh, 'the holy place,' and Petra are identical; but Dr. Robinson fixes upon Ain-el-Weibeh, in the Arabah, more than two days' journey out of Petra, as the site of this important station of the Children of Israel. As to this and many other questions which will occur to the traveller who visits Petra, I must refer to the exhaustive works of Laborde, Robinson, Irby and Mangles, Stanley, and others. Our stay was far too hurried and disturbed to permit of a proper examination into the marvellous ruins; all that I can attempt to give is a mere sketch of the more prominent features which they present. Whether the great monuments are temples or tombs, how old they are, and by whom they were constructed, to what architecture some of the décorations belong, and many other questions, can only be solved by a lengthened stay amidst these extraordinary remains. Egypt and India contain specimens of structures wrought out of the solid rock, after the fashion of those at Petra. But how this great commercial centre of trade came to be adorned in so magnificent a style may well excite surprise, as indeed does the fact of such a shut in, inaccessible spot being fixed upon for the capital of a trading country.

CHAPTER IX.

PETRA.

THE chief entrance to Petra in the days of its glory was by the remarkable gorge called the Sîk. Wady Mûsa is formed by the junction of two valleys, which unite below Eljy. At first it is broad, and its sloping banks are cultivated by the aid of the stream which runs along the valley, until it enters the dark ravine between precipitous cliffs. We were all impatience to proceed to the ruins of the city, but our dragoman assured us that without the sheikh, or some one representing him, it would be folly to attempt to go. We were therefore obliged to content ourselves, in the meantime, with examining a tomb of some size in the valley, a little distance from the opening of the Sîk. In front of the façade of the tomb, which has pilasters at the angles and a door in the centre, is a court, hewn in the rock. Two porticoes with Doric columns, all hewn in the rock, are seen on each side of the court, whose entrance is screened by a stone wall. The interior of the tomb itself is about 45 feet in length, but there are no sculptures or decorations to be seen. After examining this, we were thankful to see the sheikh, accom-

panied by two men, all well armed with lances, guns, and swords, ride up and salute us with much cordiality. It was now about eleven o'clock, and we were anxious to make the most of our time, so at once started for the city.

The lower part of Wady Mûsa, where it joins the Sîk, has numerous façades and doorways cut in the rocks, ornamented in various ways with pilasters, mouldings, and remains of friezes. We noticed three pyramidal monuments on the right, apparently solid masses of rock, about 16 feet square at the base. On the left is another singular monument with a number of pillars in the façade, the lower tier of Ionic architecture, and the whole surmounted in a recess by four slender and tall pyramids. A doorway, decorated with flowers and triglyphs over the entablature, admits to a chamber of moderate size. A little farther on we saw the remains of that triumphal arch, springing from one side of the chasm to the other, at a great height above our heads, which has so impressed all travellers with admiration. Its inaccessible situation makes it difficult to examine this remarkable bridge thus reared aloft by some fairy hand. But we were now far more impressed with the extraordinary character of the defile, along whose depths we slowly wound our way. In width only a few yards, the sides of the gorge are vast precipices of strangely-tinted rock, which constantly overlap the passage below, and shut out the light of the sun. Sometimes the lower tier of dark rocks will be succeeded by higher ranges of red cliffs, of fantastic and jagged outline, whose dizzy heights are hung with all manner of bright

green streaming caper plants, luxurious fig trees, feathery tamarisks, and other bushes. All of a sudden, the overarching cliffs will part just sufficiently to disclose a streak of intensely blue sky, and more rocky altitudes bathed in the glowing sunshine, which never penetrates the awful gloom below. The bed of this defile is the course of the stream, and in many places it is almost choked up with the masses of laurels and oleanders, whose beautiful crimson flowers delight the eye. In many parts of the ravine we observed traces of the pavement, with which, when Petra was in its glory, this almost subterraneous passage was covered. The floods have nearly swept away the square paving-stones, but enough remains to show the care with which the work was performed. You see also the small aqueduct for supplying the city with water from the stream below Eljy, remains of which can be traced at intervals on the sides of the defile. The channel, which is sometimes a deep groove cut in the rock, at other times a conduit of earthen pipes joined together with mortar, is seen some 20 or 30 feet above the bed of the stream. Many tombs and niches cut in the rock are passed, but they are mostly small and very much defaced, hardly any feature being traceable except a mouldering pillar or cornice.

But the astonishing feature of the whole is the remarkable colouring of the rocks in many places. The stone is exceedingly friable, often crumbling away like sand when touched, but its brilliant colouring baffles description. Side by side, on the sloping face of a rock, will be seen crimson,

yellow, blue, purple, white, and green, in regular streaks like ribbons, and these brilliant hues chiefly appear where the rock is not exposed to the weather. Then the cliffs are grooved, fissured, and rent in all directions, and wherever a foothold is found for their roots, there are seen creepers and flowering plants, giving a richly-clothed aspect to certain portions of the gorge. The valley twists and turns abruptly in many places, affording glimpses of the still higher range of mountains which rise above it, and admitting a flood of warm sunshine which finely contrasts with the succeeding gloom. Bitterly did I regret that we had no time to stop and examine at leisure this marvellous passage, but we heard behind us the clattering of the horses' feet of the sheikh and his followers echoing in those silent depths, and knew that a host of the Fellaheen from Eljy would soon be after them.

This valley continues for more than a mile to present these remarkable features, and then, all at once emerging from its terrific jaws, you stand transfixed before the loveliest monument of Petra, the beautiful Khuzneh, or 'Treasury of Pharaoh' as the Arabs call it. It bursts upon you with magical effect, so unique is its situation, so remarkable its surroundings, and so fairy-like the blushing tints of the rocks out of which the monument is hewn. As seen by us in the rays of the morning sun, its whole façade suffused with a flood of radiance, bringing out the pale rose colour of the rock, the temple seemed the emanation of some mighty magician's wand, which would ere long vanish away, leaving the bare face of the cliff. At first sight the beholder is over-

whelmed with the exquisite finish and elegance of every detail on whose delicate tracery time has lightly laid its touch. There is nothing in the world like it, when its perfect condition, isolated situation, and matchless colouring are all taken into account. The monument is sculptured out of the sandstone cliff, which has been all excavated for a considerable space on either side of the temple, so as to allow its proportions to be fully seen. High above its crowning urn, within whose stony recesses the Arabs believe countless treasures are concealed, the naked face of the cliff towers up for some 200 feet. The monument consists of two stories, the lower portion being a colonnade of four Corinthian columns, about 3 feet in diameter and 35 feet in height; one of the centre pillars, however, has fallen, it, like its fellow, not being cut out of the rock, but built of several pieces of stone. There are two pilasters at the extremities of the temple, hewn out of the rock, as is the whole façade. The architecture of the portico is sculptured with a frieze and vases, connected with festoons and wreaths. Between the outermost pillar and the pilasters may be distinguished the remains of figures, once standing in high relief, but now almost entirely worn away. Above the portico is a pediment, having in the centre a beautiful cylindrical monument standing by itself, adorned with delicate Corinthian columns and rich capitals in perfect preservation, and a dome and urn at the top of all, in which are the supposed hidden treasures. On either side of this circular monument is an intervening space, and then succeed two pillars, similar to those in the portico below, also sup-

porting a richly sculptured cornice. Three pedestals resting on the flat surface of the portico, having one of these pillars on each side, once supported statues, but these are much mutilated, probably by the Arabs, who have a special antipathy to all representations of the human form. They seemed to have considered that Pharaoh founded this city and its most splendid monuments, and that in the urn at the summit of this noble temple the treasures of the mighty king rest undisturbed. This hidden treasure is 120 feet above the heads of the wandering Arabs, who in revenge fire off their guns loaded with ball at the urn, in hopes of breaking off a portion or bringing it bodily down.

In the body of the building are three chambers, one large hall entering by a door under the portico, which has rough unadorned walls and ceilings. Two lateral chambers enter from either end of the portico, in one of which are two hollows, possibly intended as receptacles for coffins. All the finely-chiselled details of the decorations are strangely fresh, and the only portions injured are the figures and the column which has fallen. It is difficult to determine how old the monument is, whether it was a tomb or a temple, and to whom it was dedicated. Still, no description can give an idea of its unearthly beauty, with its setting of great rocky precipices on all sides, hung with bright green shrubs and creepers, all around being silent as the grave. Long did we linger, drinking in the beauty of its rosy-tinted façade, with several Arabs looking wonderingly at us. They never deign to glance at those noble ruins, of whose object they are utterly

ignorant. Yet again, during our brief and unsatisfactory stay, did I return to take a last look at the exquisite temple, and felt grieved to think that I should see it no more.

The valley in which we now found ourselves leads at right angles with the Sîk, straight into the centre of the city, past the theatre and principal range of tomb temples near it. Along its bed the stream flows, fringed with oleanders and laurels, and the ravine presently expands considerably. Red is still the prevailing hue of the rocks, which rise up in jagged irregular masses, and out of the face of the sloping mountain side the theatre is hewn in the rock. The arena is 120 feet in diameter, and there are thirty-three tiers of seats rising in a slope one above another, capable of containing over 3,000 persons. The stage is built, not excavated; and only the bases of three short columns remain on its inner face. Seated on one of the uppermost tiers, you command a view over a great portion of the city and tombs. In front is the narrow valley with its oleander-fringed streamlet, murmuring unseen amidst fallen capitals; beyond it is a rocky terrace, in which are excavated some of the smaller tombs, while above this again rise up the noble range of red sandstone cliffs, extending for more than two miles, and presenting to view a series of pillared temples, Corinthian façades with lofty elevations, deep doorways and windows, adorned with friezes and sculptured mouldings, one after another in endless perspective, until a distant bend in the mountain side closes in the view. Turning to the left, you gaze over the wide area of mounds of earth, strewn with an

occasional capital or fragment of column, which once was the site of the city itself, and the bed of the stream may be traced by the portions of massive masonry which at intervals line its banks. Of all the majestic buildings that formerly crowned this now deserted waste, hardly any trace remains, save the ruins of two temples, fragments of a triumphal arch, and the walls of 'Pharaoh's Palace.'

Complete indeed is the destruction which has overtaken this great and prosperous city, into whose lap was poured all the rich treasures of Arabia, the spices and silks from the vast continent of India. Sitting here towards evening, when the declining rays of the sun just fell upon the uppermost range of tombs, gilding these habitations of the dead with a momentary splendour, the mind might well revert to the scene as it may have appeared more than 2,000 years ago. The gay crowds who thronged the tiers of seats, filling the air with their applause as some 'well-graced actor' appeared on the scene; the long-drawn cavalcade of camels, horses, and their warlike attendants which, perchance, at the moment was defiling past the theatre on their way from far-distant Damascus; the busy hum of the neighbouring city, whose rich inhabitants filled the noisy mart, or congregated in groups along the broad quays bordering the stream the dignified forms of the priests, clad in gorgeous vestments, who offered up incense and 'strange worship' before their rock-hewn fanes—all the various spirit-stirring sights which a great capital in the heyday of its prosperity would exhibit, might pass before the mind's eye in the solitary

reverie amidst the tenantless tombs and fallen temples of this city of the dead!

But I must not linger longer in this fascinating spot, for we have a great extent of ground to get over before night, and already the neighbouring Arabs were beginning to come in, one by one, to see what could be got out of us. From this point we proceeded to examine the principal range of tombs hewn in the eastern cliffs, opposite to the theatre. The greater portion of them are Grecian in character, though in a few there are distinct traces of Egyptian architecture. Generally a doorway, with pilasters on either side, admits into a large chamber in which, in some instances, we observed oblong pits, as if for the reception of dead bodies. Sometimes, in the side walls of the chamber, there would be deep recesses, which may have contained sarcophagi, and stone divans or steps, 1 or 2 feet in height, would run round the wall. In one or two tombs I observed an arched recess opposite the door, as if an altar once stood there; but, generally, the whole interior was absolutely plain and unmarked. Occasionally, a small lateral chamber would enter from the main one, and in one or two of the larger monuments several side rooms were observed by us. In very few of them were there columns to support the roof, and the absence of plaster or painting distinguished their interiors from the tombs of Egypt. One noticeable feature is the dissimilarity of all the tombs both in size and ornaments, and, taken as a whole, their style of architecture is peculiar to Petra. A favourite style of decoration is two small flights

of steps, cut in the rock, springing from the pilasters on each side of the doorway, and meeting a few yards above the door. Many tombs take a pyramidal form, in which case they are small in size, with a very low doorway, and devoid of ornament. In most of the interior chambers the vivid colouring to which I have before alluded is to be seen, regular streaks of well-defined bright tints, varying from scarlet to pale yellow. The rock is excessively friable in many places, and I tried in vain to break off from the interior of one specially brilliant-hued tomb a good specimen of the gradations of colour; outside, where the stone is exposed to the sun and rain, it is hard enough, but still many of the pilasters and friezes surmounting the doorways are much decayed and crumbled, leaving few traces of their original design. In numerous instances, too, green creeping plants and mosses have found a foothold in the crevices of the sculptured façade, and clothe with verdure these monuments of the dead.

The tomb which will first strike the traveller's attention as his eye ranges along this marvellous array of sepulchres is one in the cliff on his right, a few hundred yards beyond the theatre. A raised platform, about 15 feet in breadth, supported upon hollow arched terraces, elevates the structure above the banks of the stream. At either end of the platform are small open porticoes in the excavated cliff, supported by columns. The façade of the tomb is lofty, consisting of four Doric columns, attached to and cut out of the rock, and the pediment is crowned by an urn. A doorway admits to a

lofty chamber with three recesses at one end, where in all probability altars once stood, and an inscription has been discovered, painted on the wall, giving the date of the consecration of the building as a Christian church. Besides a small window over the door, there are three others higher up, but there is little external decoration on the façade. Succeeding this tomb is another one, generally known as the 'Corinthian Tomb,' which, in its upper part, has a considerable resemblance to the Khuzneh. There is the same second story, and a cylindrical monument adorned with pillars and crowned by an urn, while each side has a pillared structure with entablature and pediment. A great part of the lower story has fallen away, as the tomb is in a somewhat exposed situation, and tufts of grass and shrubs have overspread a considerable portion of its surface. Fragments of eight columns, a doorway and windows, give a good idea of what the whole monument may once have appeared, and the chambers within are spacious. There are six recesses off the largest chamber, of irregular size and construction.

Immediately adjoining the 'Corinthian tomb' is a very large and splendid monument, which is indeed the most conspicuous one of the entire range, as seen from a distance. It is a broad façade of three distinct ranges of columns, erected one above another, but more than one-half of the uppermost pillars have perished, apparently from a fall of the rock out of which they were hewn. To one entering the city from the west, when this temple was in its perfection, it must have presented a noble appearance, for it is grand even in its

decay, and its lofty façade was the chief object which attracted my lingering gaze, as we for the last time surveyed, from a long way off, the ruins of Petra. There seemed to have been four separate entrances, flanked with pilasters, leading into large chambers, in one of which are four receptacles for the dead, as well as some remains of stucco ornaments. Above the plain pediment, at an interval of a few feet, is seen a second tier of eighteen Ionic columns, which, like those below, are not detached from the rock; the capitals of some of them, however, are separate pieces of stone fastened to the surface of the cliff. In the vicinity of these three monuments, the bold precipice out of which they are excavated, rises up in masses of rock, irregular in height and form. Sometimes there are sharp peaks, down whose sides creepers, flowering plants, and ferns stream in the wind, and in other places only a small ledge of rock extends between the edge of the cliff and the tomb below. Between each of the more prominent tombs there is an intervening space of unhewn rock, and though the base of the cliffs forms a continuous terrace, still it is often interrupted by some platform of masonry or natural fall in the ground.

The circling range of cliffs takes a bend inwards after you pass the monument last described, and I only made a very hurried visit to several of the tombs in this direction. Many of them are no better than a shapeless cavern in the rock, so completely have the ornaments and pillars been destroyed through time and the winter's storms. In front of these the gravelly soil slopes gradually towards the stream, beyond

which again are mounds of earth and undulations in the ground, covered with remains of columns, capitals, fragments of stone pavement, and similar evidences of a large city. There is no extensive flat surface remaining in the natural basin which, hemmed in by mountains on all sides, constitutes the area of the actual city of Petra, and it is difficult to define what its actual limits were. The stream which passes through Wady Mûsa and the Sîk flows in a northerly direction, past the theatre and principal tombs, and then turns to the west, almost intersecting the site of the city. It is joined midway across the broad ravine or basin, as it may be better styled, by the dry bed of another stream, along whose banks also can be seen the ruins of two bridges, besides other remains. A considerable accumulation of stones, fallen pillars and *débris* line both sides of the main stream, and its banks had been strongly built up with massive blocks to withstand the rush of water. In one place there is a vaulted covering over the bed of the stream, with a substantial pavement beyond, and as you approach the building called 'Pharaoh's Palace' the principal ruins are seen.

Proceeding along the left bank of the stream, and passing the prostrate walls and columns of a nameless temple, you come upon traces of an ancient paved way, leading past the ruins of a triumphal arch, which, judging from the pilasters, bas-reliefs and other fragments scattered about, must have been of an ornate description. Beyond this is the largest building of the ancient city, whose outer walls are still

standing, though the ornaments in stucco and stone which once adorned it have crumbled away. 'Pharaoh's Palace,' as it is called, is a building of solid construction, its massive side walls, nearly 50 feet high, standing erect amidst the extensive heaps of *debris* all around. A cornice and frieze in fair preservation relieve the baldness of the lofty walls, and, from certain positions, the view of the palace and the great precipitous cliffs behind, pierced with numerous small excavations for dwellings or tombs, is very striking. Great quantities of displaced stones lie about amidst bushes and flowering shrubs, which have found a resting-place where all is desolation and silence. It is really difficult to make one's way through the wilderness of ruins, in which a solitary column is seen standing, when its fellows have long since crumbled into dust. Nothing can exceed the feeling of dreariness and isolation which overwhelms the spectator who thus threads his way among such material traces of fallen greatness, while, to give additional sadness to the picture, on lifting his eyes he sees afar off the countless sepulchres of the dead.

But the reader must not suppose that we were so fortunate as to enjoy an unmolested examination of the monuments above described. We were followed to our encampment, which we fixed in front of the cliffs, not far from the 'Corinthian Tomb,' by several of the Fellaheen from Eljy, who forthwith attached themselves to our dragoman, making his tent their head-quarters. But while giving most of their attention to the tobacco, coffee and other stores which

he had to produce in their honour, they kept a look-out upon our movements. Probably the idea that all travellers are in search of treasures concealed amidst the ruins, with which Burckhardt found the Arabs strongly possessed, makes the ever-watchful guardians of Petra keep a sharp eye upon the motions of their visitors. At any rate, as long as we were busily engaged in examining all the monumental remains and tombs in the vicinity of our encampment, we were left to our own devices. But upon proceeding along the banks of the stream towards Pharaoh's Palace, we observed that we were followed by three savage-looking Arabs, well armed with pistols and knives, who very soon came up to us and would not be shaken off. They thenceforth kept up a constant series of remarks addressed to us, varied by conversation in a lower tone amongst themselves. Of this, as may be supposed, not one word was intelligible to us, and the sight of their villanous countenances made one indisposed to wander too far away into the caverns and ravines in the cliffs before us which we would like to have explored. We could not tell how many more of their number might be following us, and Achmet had given us warning of the very bad repute in which these Petra Fellaheen are held. Then they kept offering us small coins, bits of stone, and little articles of ornament, apparently by way of relics, all of which, at first, we steadily refused, though eventually Mr. Gere took a small piece of fur from one man, and I selected a copper coin with one or two Greek characters on it. This, as will be seen subsequently, brought us into very great

trouble; and travellers cannot be too careful in strictly refusing either to accept or purchase any articles which may be offered them. Mr. Ashton also, after incessant importunity on the part of one of our unwelcome followers, accepted a cherry stick with a peculiar triangular handle, much used by the Bedawin, representations of which occur in ancient hieroglyphics. Our American friend also was the innocent cause of one man discharging his pistol in the air, he having merely taken it into his hand to examine the rude weapon, and it was forthwith fired off by its owner with an air of triumph. For this the fellow had an object in view, as we afterwards discovered to our cost, though at the time we merely supposed he was proving the excellence of his weapon.

As we had now examined a considerable portion of the ruins, and the sun was extremely oppressive, we thought it would be well to return to our tents and ascertain what arrangement had been come to with the sheikh and his followers. We found about twenty well-armed Arabs hovering round the tents, some seated on the ground, others standing; while one or two of the principal men were vehemently discussing matters with Achmet and our sheikh in their tent. They were evidently highly displeased at the arrangements which we had come to at Akabah with Sheikh Mohammed. His half-brother had enough to do to defend his absent relative, and poor Achmet wore a most troubled and lugubrious expression of countenance. It was clear that we should have reserved more money, for the authorities at Petra rightly

consider that they are, after all, those most entitled to benefit by the visits of travellers. This is one of the most unsatisfactory features of a Petra expedition, because it does seem singular that the negotiations are all to be conducted at a place several days' journey distant, without any delegate from those who are the actual masters of the city, to see that their claims are not overlooked. To make matters worse for us, the principal sheikh of the Petra district, Abnegazion by name, was away in the mountains, so that there was no one really able to keep order among the clamorous Fellaheen who surrounded us. Fresh arrivals also constantly took place, and it was quite clear that they meant to make the most of us, for a number of the men took up their quarters in one of the large cavern tombs close to our tents, where they lighted a fire and made preparations for passing the night.

Disgusted with so much noise and angry disputations of whose details we were ignorant, though we had a good guess as to their purport, Mr. Ashton and I walked towards the Sîk valley to have another look at the beautiful Khuzneh, while Mr. Gere remained in the tent watching the tumult. After all the wrangling and clamour which we had left, the stillness of the ravine in which this unique monument is situated was doubly grateful; and, seated on a rock, I took a long survey of its exquisite details. I felt reluctant to leave a scene which I well knew I should never behold again; and the pale pink flush that suffuses with ethereal beauty this lovely structure, seemed to grow deeper as the declining sun sunk behind those wild mountains. I fully experienced

also that feeling of melancholy which impressed both Bartlett and Olin as they surveyed the Khuzneh, whose fairy-like form haunted my memory long after more imposing monuments were well-nigh forgotten.

We found the aspect of affairs in no degree smoother on our return to the camp, and each hour brought fresh accessions to the numbers of the Fellaheen, who now became more demonstrative and threatening in their attitude. To do them justice, however, they certainly respected our tent, for although one or two of them looked in at the partially open entrance from time to time, they did not actually favour us with their most unwelcome presence. As night fell, they lighted more fires in the surrounding tombs, and the yellow glare of the flames lit up the savage figures of the Arabs, casting a strong glow over the ruddy rocks. The situation was highly picturesque and dramatic; three unfortunate travellers, utterly impecunious as regarded the only coin current in Petra, many days' journey from the faintest semblance of civilised authority or jurisdiction, and at the mercy of a yelling mob of wild Arabs, who were gradually working themselves up to a most unpleasant pitch of frenzy. They seemed all to talk at once, and in such terms of exasperation that, believing at one time they had come to extremities with Achmet and his attendants, we emerged from our tent to ascertain the cause of the angry tumult. Several of the men immediately came up to us, making very significant signs that we should leave them to settle their differences in their own fashion, and as we only appeared to add fuel to the fire

of their wrath, we again sought our tent. That night was certainly one of the most anxious I ever spent, for it appeared that they were determined to force us to accede to their demands for more money, as they no doubt could not understand how travellers, with all the comforts and luxurious appliances which we possessed, had not the wherewithal to satisfy their claims. Still, I knew that we were watched over by One who 'slumbereth not,' and that He never will fail those who put their trust in Him.

Next morning the tumult was renewed, but in the broad light of day the scene had a more modified aspect than it wore in the lurid atmosphere of those ruined tombs, lit up by the watch-fires of the Arabs. Still the debate between Achmet and Sheikh Mohammed's brother on the one side, and the leading Fellaheen on the other, was being carried on with full vigour, so we were glad to stroll away, apparently without attracting special notice, to examine some more tombs on the eastern cliff. Mr. Ashton and I struck across the shallow wady forming part of the area of the ancient city, in search of the tomb with a Latin inscription mentioned by Laborde, but were not successful in finding it. On our return to the tents we found that a better understanding had been come to between the conflicting parties, and that the tents were being struck. However, we were by no means to be allowed to get beyond the reach of our importunate hosts, guardians, or enemies, as the case might be, for it was extremely difficult to decide in what character they considered themselves to stand towards us. We now saw the mistake

which had been committed in taking the two or three trifles from our attendants of the previous day. They put in a claim of several dollars for each separate article we had taken, and the man who fired off his pistol demanded an exorbitant amount for this fusillade in our honour, or whatever we might consider it. Poor Achmet was driven to his wits' end to furnish excuses, arguments, and what was the only effectual persuader, coin. Each of us ransacked our purses, the cook and waiter produced what money they had, but still the cry was, Oliver Twist-like, for 'more.' Fortunately for us, an elderly man, evidently looked upon with respect by the others, with a fine countenance and a benevolent courteous air altogether, seemed to take our part, and it was arranged that he and several other of the more respectable Fellaheen should accompany us for a time. We would have liked to see more of Petra, but so long as we were surrounded by a yelling rabble nothing could be done in comfort; and besides, we had a long journey to Hebron, and had no wish to be unduly delayed.

At last our preparations were complete, and, leaving the baggage animals to follow, we set off before noon, following the left bank of the stream, and passed close to Pharaoh's Palace. We then ascended a rather steep acclivity near the base of the western cliffs, where the rivulet of Wady Mûsa enters a dark ravine, so thickly overgrown with oleanders and laurels as to be well-nigh impassable. There are numerous singular excavations in the cliffs near this spot which will well repay careful examination. These tombs are much

smaller and less ornamented than those in the eastern cliff, the pilasters and cornices of the façade being generally almost worn away. Indeed, comparatively few of these had ever been carved on the tombs, which are mostly of an unimportant character. Their mode of construction would appear to have been singular, judging from the unfinished specimen which may be seen here. The face of the rock was scarped away so as to leave two flanking buttresses, between which the façade was intended to rise. Having traced on the smooth face of the rock the design of the tomb, the architect proceeded first to construct the capitals of the columns, which, with about a foot of the pillar itself and the bare lines of the entablature above, is all that has been finished. There is a square doorway in the lower part of the unfinished front towards the left corner, which admits to a good-sized chamber containing receptacles for dead bodies. Many of the tombs near this seemed to be camping-places for the Bedawin, and utilised as sheltering spots for their flocks and camels, judging from the litter which they contained.

There is a large isolated mass of rocks to the south of Pharaoh's Palace, which we kept on our left as we slowly marched along with our numerous cavalcade of Arabs surrounding us. This seems to have been considered by Laborde to be the ancient Acropolis of Petra, or at any rate to have once been crowned by a strong fortress. It occupies a commanding site overlooking the area of part of the city, and there are remains of foundations and buildings which may be traced by the careful observer. Our road lay along the

banks of the rivulet at its base, and we presently wound our way up a rocky defile leading to a small plain, from whence a fine view of Mount Hor is obtained. In the sandstone rocky terraces which seam the ground to the south, there are numerous curious excavated chambers or tombs, some of them partaking more of the character of cisterns or reservoirs for water. There is a range of low red-coloured cliffs, also, with great natural caverns or archways in them, which attracted our observation.

At this point, however, an unexpected announcement was made to us that the principal sheikh of the district, Abnegazion, whom I have before named, was riding after us with a considerable body of followers. He was too important a personage not to be treated with every consideration, so we came forward, accompanied by Achmet, and received him with proper *empressement*. His appearance, and that of his retainers, was highly picturesque, and their horses were the best we had yet seen. Most of the men, however, were on foot, but their dress, arms, and accoutrements were far superior in quality to those of the Petra men. The sheikh wore a *kufiyèh* of rich silk, and the flowing costume of the desert set off his dark, handsome features to advantage. He had a ready smile and a courteous bearing, and altogether seemed quite disposed to make himself agreeable. Apparently he had heard of the annoyance to which we had been subjected, for he was profuse in his apologies, and, in particular, urged us to make the ascent to the famous rock-hewn monument El Deir, 'the convent,' certainly one of the glories of

Petra. This we were glad to do, because on the previous day, when we expressed a wish to visit it, our guides professed utter ignorance of the subject, and indeed our time would not have allowed it. Accordingly, as it was an expedition involving both time and toil, Achmet thought it best to pitch our camp for the night in one of the large caverns in the cliffs at our back, and the sheikh selected three men to accompany us as guides.

The Deir is a noble monument, hewn entirely out of the rock in the face of a precipice far up in the mountain ranges which hem in Petra, and from its wildly-secluded situation and very difficult approach many travellers do not visit it. Laborde first fully described the temple from personal examination, although it was seen from the summit of Mount Hor by Irby and Mangles, who could not get a guide to conduct them to the spot. To ascend the rocky fastnesses leading to this remote monument a guide is indispensable; so, accompanied by our three barefooted, wild-looking companions, each of whom had a long gun slung across his shoulders, we retraced our steps until we arrived at the opening in the cliffs through which the stream from Wady Mûsa passes. From this point we pursued a northern direction up a wide ravine, with a sandy bottom, in which grow numerous and large laurels, oleanders, and wild fig trees. The rocky precipices are here of a deep red colour, and are of great height, rising in a succession of crags of an inaccessible description. The base of the rocks, close by which our path lay, is in many places pierced with excavations, without any pretension

to regularity or architecture; but higher up on the opposite cliffs are seen some large tombs ornamented with columns. As we threaded our way amidst the luxuriant masses of shrubs which, in some places, almost filled the ravine now growing much narrower and steeper, we were struck with the grandeur of this strange pass. In some places great detached masses of rock, fallen from the overhanging cliffs, oppose an almost insurmountable barrier to your progress. The gorge differs from the Sîk in that, while in the latter the overarching rocks allow little of the mountains beyond to be seen, here you gaze upwards at terrific peaks and wild precipices which defy any attempts to scale their dizzy heights.

After a while we reached the commencement of the grand series of stairs, hewn in the sandstone rock, which conducts to the Deir. These are by no means continuous, for floods of water and the feet of pilgrims in far-distant ages have worn the steps away in many instances. Blocks of stone in some places have been placed in position as steps, and in others the face of the rock has been formed into a gentle slope, up which you can mount with some difficulty. This singular staircase follows the various windings of the narrow pass, which becomes now excessively steep, and the pathway occasionally skirts deep gorges, whose dark recesses cannot be fathomed. Yew trees of good size are seen springing from some resting-place amid the ruddy rocks, and a profusion of creepers find a foothold, from which their streamers wave in the breeze, which rarely, however, visits these gloomy

defiles. Sometimes a short flight of steps, branching off from the main range, conducts to an excavation or small tomb, that once may have been a sanctuary in all probability. There are one or two particularly dangerous corners which have to be turned as the path grows steeper, and in places where the stairs have been entirely worn away it is difficult to secure a foothold. It is a savage, Salvator Rosa style of scene altogether, and the gradations of colour also heighten the remarkable appearance of the rocks.

At last, after half an hour's toil, we stood upon the broad platform, partly excavated and partly built, at the end of which rises up the grand façade of the Deir. It is a stupendous and wonderful monument, in perfect preservation, and has a bold architectural elevation entirely hewn in the sand-stone rock. Towering up to a height of 150 feet, with columns 50 feet high and of corresponding diameter, above which are massive architraves, another range of pillars, and an enormous urn crowning the huge structure, it is little wonder that it excites the astonishment and admiration of all travellers. Its general appearance is a mixture of the Khuzneh and the Corinthian tomb; but it is much larger than either, having more columns and projections, though it is devoid of windows—in fact, the only entrance to its fine interior hall is by a lofty doorway, which seems not to have been cut down to a level with the base of the façade, but is some feet above it. The style of architecture appears to be considered defective by those learned in such matters, and the building has but little of the rich elegance of detail and

carving noticeable in the Khuzneh; but it has an unquestionable grandeur of its own. The columns are not entirely separated from the rock, and there are several broad arched niches in both upper and lower story, apparently for the reception of statues. The cliff must have been first perpendicularly cut away after immense labour, so as to present a surface for excavating the monument, and the great buttresses of rock on either side show the depth of the cutting. The main feature in the upper story is the same cylindrical monument crowned with a ponderous vase, that is seen in the two fine tomb temples above mentioned. The façade is 150 feet broad, and you can ascend to the top of the entire temple by a staircase cut in the rock. There is nothing of interest in the interior of the great chamber, which is devoid of ornament, and very likely was used as a Christian church, there being a niche at one end suitable for an altar.

Situated as this extraordinary temple is amidst the profound solitudes of those strange, fantastic red precipices, nearly 1,500 feet above the site of Petra, it must ever offer materials for interesting speculation as to its object and isolated position. Was it a triumphal monument, a dwelling-place for men, a fane for worship, or a majestic abode for the dead? What daring architect wrought out this wondrous edifice in the solid mountain side, and who were those that assembled here to celebrate their strange rites within those silent walls? From its broad esplanade you gaze across a wild array of mountains, and on ascending the crag opposite to

the Deir, a much more extensive view is gained. On the other side of a vast abyss extending amidst the spurs of another range of lofty cliffs, the grand form of Mount Hor is seen, with the lone tomb of the great High Priest of Israel on its rugged brow. It has a sharp, jagged outline, and the small white building covering the actual tomb is distinctly visible; but the precipitous stony sides of the mountain would seem to deter any save those accustomed to such exercise from attempting its ascent. Part of Wady Mûsa is seen, with the serrated masses of rock surrounding it; and the eye takes in a wide range of prospect, from the misty hills of Palestine, along the broad valley of the Arabah, to the red precipices of Petra. Various small chambers have been hewn in this rocky peak opposite to the Deir, and remains of columns and cornices, with one or two niches cut in the rock, show that the whole ground surrounding the Deir was in all probability held sacred.

While we were calmly enjoying the noble view and speculating on the uses of this strange temple, our three attendants had disappeared. As the afternoon was far advanced, and already the clefts and chasms in the rocks were darkened with the shadows of approaching twilight, we thought it would be well to commence our descent. However, our guides were nowhere to be seen, so we were somewhat at a loss what to do. Suddenly the loud report of a gun saluted our ears, and was re-echoed from crag to crag with startling effect, but our efforts to discover the place from whence the shot came were ineffectual. We could not observe any

smoke which might guide us to the spot, and listened for the sound of voices; but all was silent as the grave. The echoes of the shot had sullenly died away, and the unearthly stillness which seems to reign amid these once populous fastnesses again brooded over the scene.

After waiting a long time we found there was nothing for it but to descend, trusting to our recollection of the upward path. This is not so very easy a matter at first, for there are several very steep and dangerous turnings, where a false step would send the traveller headlong down a yawning abyss; but we succeeded in almost gaining the commencement of the crumbling staircase, when a loud shout from behind showed us that the wandering guides were on our track. When they came up they seemed to be in a high state of excitement; for it turned out that they had killed an ibex, but were unable to drag its body along with them. They looked wilder than ever, with streaks of blood about their fingers and faces, and they were flushed with their rapid descent and the excitement of the chase. Very significant were the signs they made to us to explain the mode in which they stalked and brought down the unfortunate animal. Drawing their hands across their throats, and wildly gesticulating with their arms, while their eyes gleamed with an expression of savage glee, they showed how the sight of blood arouses the passions of these children of nature. They laughed and chattered away among themselves, and, apparently delighted to exhibit their prowess, two of them subsequently started in pursuit of some par-

tridges which we saw in the distance, and fired one or two shots at them—this time, however, without any result.

When we got back to our camping-ground we found the baggage and tent furniture all stowed away in one of the large caverns, and a number of the Arabs squatted in front, smoking and drinking coffee in a very amicable manner. Achmet ran up a sort of partition, which partially screened our dinner-table from observation, and we made a capital meal in our novel quarters, undisturbed by our visitors. We found the sheikh disposed to be very friendly, though he was extremely indignant with his brother dignitary Mohammed for appropriating such an undue amount of the *backsheesh*, and we understood that he did not mean to allow that matter to drop. The men who were in attendance upon him were really a handsome and intelligent-looking set. Many of them were well-dressed, clean-looking fellows, and they seemed delighted with a few old engravings from the 'Illustrated London News,' which I happened to have in my portmanteau. Specially they looked with much interest at a plate representing the Prince of Wales, passing it from hand to hand and making free comments on it. His Royal Highness was styled by them 'Sultan Ingleez,' and his beard, features, and general bearing seemed to meet with approval.

The night was clear and starry, and the majestic double peak of Mount Hor, towering up right in front, was very striking, with the dark firmament above and the dusky outlines of the ranges of Mount Seir in the distance. A strange picture presented itself to the imagination as one looked

upon that vast mountain side, whose rugged heights were now clothed with the shadows of night. The host of Israel, wearied with their long wanderings in the desert and longing for the repose of the Promised Land, had here to mourn the death of one of their great leaders. For the irresistible decree had gone forth: 'And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel' (*see* Numbers xx.); 'And Aaron died there in the top of the mount' (verse 28). From henceforth the great law-giver stood alone against a rebellious and murmuring host; but his courage never faltered, for he knew that One whose counsels 'fail not,' watched over His chosen people.

We remembered also that we had looked our last upon that long-lost city a few of whose monumental remains I have endeavoured to describe, and the idea naturally occurred to what end were those strange structures raised? The Deir, the Khuzneh, and some of the larger monuments appear to have been temples; but the greater number of the smaller excavations, in all probability, were originally dwelling-places of the Horim, or 'Dwellers in caves.' That there were many of this ancient people in the land of Edom as far back as the days of the Patriarchs, we learn from various passages of Holy Writ. The Edomites for seventeen centuries were a powerful people, and doubtless dwelt among the secluded valleys of Petra, whose soft rocks were hewn into rude habitations with comparative ease. It is not difficult

to see that the adornments and windows may have been added at a subsequent period. The Roman conquerors gratified their love of the ornate in art by forming the beautiful façade of the Khuzneh and the ponderous architecture of the Deir. Possibly the large chamber in each was all that they found over which to elaborate so costly and splendid a monument. It is impossible to say who first constructed the buildings of which such numerous traces and remains exist amidst the area of the city, but we can easily conceive that those numerous excavations in the surrounding cliffs might well be used as convenient resting-places for their dead.

No traveller, however, can fail to be struck with the completeness of the destruction of this once prosperous city. Its temples lie prostrate on the ground, its quays have fallen in, and its bridges are in ruins; its triumphal arches and stately columns serve in their utter overthrow but to 'point a moral,' though no sculptured record is to be found even to 'adorn a tale;' and only a few unimportant inscriptions, traced by some of its later possessors, attract the passing notice of the chance antiquarian. Terrible were the denunciations against this land of Edom, poured forth by the prophets of old, and how absolutely have they been fulfilled! 'I will stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will make it desolate from Teman,' says Ezekiel. 'Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee desolate,' again says the same prophet. 'I will lay thy cities waste,' he con-

tinues. 'I will make thee despised among men,' says Jeremiah. 'The owl also and the raven shall dwell in it,' writes Isaiah. 'Then said the Lord of Hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down,' says Malachi.

Many other passages from the Scriptures might be given, but the foregoing will suffice to show how sternly the judgment of God has been wrought out against the inhabitants of this country and their dwelling-places. Truly the scorpion, the vulture, and the wild goat are now the sole denizens of those mysterious and splendid structures, though occasionally their domain is invaded by the wandering Arab or the ubiquitous Anglo-Saxon traveller. Their remote situation and the halo of interest cast around them by the narratives of some illustrious modern writers who have visited Petra, will always offer fascinations to future generations of travellers; and the roseate glories of its one unrivalled temple must ever recur to memory like a beautiful vision—an almost myth-like creation of dreamland!

CHAPTER X.

PETRA TO HEBRON.

NEXT MORNING, being Friday, March 22, we made an early start, for we had a long fatiguing march before us. After breakfast the sheikh and his chief men came to have a farewell talk, and to make a few more demands, for they were not by any means pleased with the arrangement come to. They really understood that we had no more money, for we offered, if one of their number, in whom the sheikh had entire confidence, would accompany us to Jerusalem, to hand over to him there an additional amount of *backsheesh*. For some reason or other this was not agreed to, but the Arab chief was, to a certain extent, pacified by a promise on our part that a good pistol should be sent him from Cairo, and this Achmet undertook to arrange. I presented his son, a well-dressed, good-looking youth, about sixteen years old, with a pocket knife furnished with various accessories, such as picker, gimlet, corkscrew, &c., and he took it with an air of gratification. This young gentleman wore a remarkably stylish head-dress, a new cloak or *abba*, and a pair of handsome new red leather boots reaching over the knee. He

must have been looked upon as a regular dandy among the Bedawin, and he seemed to be treated with much consideration by his father's retainers.

The sheikh's countenance certainly looked clouded and gloomy, and he seemed extremely unwilling, after all, to part company with us, for his valedictory salutation, to say the least of it, lacked cordiality. However, off we started, having Mount Hor on our right hand, and in the course of an hour or so we came to the commencement of an excessively steep pass, leading from the great rocky plateau surrounding Petra down to the broad Wady Arabah, whose white sandy wastes we could see extending for many leagues at our feet. The track down the side of the mountains which form one of the ranges of Seir is excessively steep, and very hard upon the poor camels. It was a wonder that the contents of some of the boxes were not smashed to pieces. At last we gained the lower slopes of the mountain spurs, which are formed of regular heaps, or embankments, of soft white sand, apparently dislodged from the higher steeps above. Many cliffs of white limestone are seen in the shallow valleys about this spot, and the sun is reflected from these with powerful effect. After reposing for a while in one hot, stony valley under the very insufficient shadow of a thorny acacia, we passed into the Wady Arabah. At first it is covered with stones and a few stunted shrubs here and there, scattered among which are some larger trees, but before long it opens out into a broad sandy plain.

We had now arrived at a territory of debateable land, which

seemed to have considerable terrors for both our escort and our dragoman. It was therefore arranged that, after dinner, we should push on for some hours, taking advantage of the favouring moonlight. Very cool and pleasant it was to enjoy an *al fresco* dinner in the balmy evening air of the desert, and to watch the soft light of the moon gradually overspreading the scene. Indulging in the luxury of a pipe of Turkish tobacco, and imbibing a cup of fragrant coffee, we soon forgot the exertions of the day, and were ready for a fresh start. We moved off silently and expeditiously, no sound being heard save the dull, heavy tread of the patient camels, while the pale ghostly landscape around seemed pervaded with an air of dimness and mystery. The plain is a hard, gravelly, sandy waste, across which faint tracks, made by the wandering tribes, may be distinguished. No sound of animal or human being was to be heard, nor was the faintest ray of light from tent or camp-fire to be seen.

After marching for four hours in this stealthy manner, we brought up towards midnight at a place where a few small trees gave a slight shelter, but as the night was so warm we needed little covering, and unpacked only a very few things. On the following day we again made a very early start, and marched steadily on the whole day till four o'clock. The heat was great, and we had nothing to quench our thirst except some most unpleasant-looking-water. We were much disappointed to find no spring at Ain-el-Weibeh, the spot that Robinson and Porter fix upon as the true site of Kadesh, though Stanley takes an opposite view from these competent

observers as well as learned writers. Dr. Tristram, however, in his recent work upon the 'Topography of the Holy Land,' authoritatively pronounces 'Ain Gadis,' at the head of the Wady Gadis (the name being the exact Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew 'Kadesh'), to be the true site. Ain Gadis is situated a day's journey from Lussan, one of the unidentified cities of Southern Judah, and there are three springs of water, which, in rainy weather, overflow and form a stream.

Kadesh is a very important place in the record of the Israelitish wanderings, and is first mentioned in the Book of Genesis in connection with the battles between the kings, when the two rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah fell. The Israelites reached this place after leaving Sinai and Hazeroth, and from it they sent forward spies to examine the rich and fertile land which they had been directed to conquer. They were defeated near Kadesh by the Amalekites; and here, on two separate occasions, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron. Here, too, Moses wrought a striking miracle in bringing water from the rock to supply the wants of that great host, though, in the manner of doing so, he displeased the Lord.

It is certainly a dreary and uninviting spot now, whatever attractions it may once have had for a vast concourse of warriors; and I cannot help thinking, with Dean Stanley, that the site of Kadesh must be sought for very much nearer to Mount Hor. The only features of Ain-el-Weibeh are a few palm trees, some low clusters of bushes and coarse rank grass or rushes, with two or three muddy, shallow pools, or rather

puddles of water. Spring we could find none, and the first two or three of our thirsty camels soon drained the scanty supply of most uninviting-looking fluid. From this point, until we reached the terribly trying ascent called the Sufâh Pass, we rode on through scenery of an extremely uninteresting character. Numerous shallow wadys, traversed with occasional low ridges, and mounds of shifting desert sand, present nothing attractive to the eye; nor are the tribes who hover about this part of the Arabah at all very desirable characters to encounter, so we delayed as little as possible on our journey to Hebron. Our provisions, both for man and beast, were now also reduced to the lowest ebb, and Achmet was apprehensive lest they should give way altogether.

None of us are likely soon to forget the long, wearisome drag up that painful Sufâh Pass, its fatigue aggravated by the burning sun overhead and the glare from the shining hard rocks. But it was for our poor, faithful animals, who had toiled so long under the weight of so much heavy baggage, that we felt compunctions. The slippery rock, which rises certainly at an angle of forty-five degrees from the plain, is so smooth that it affords little or no hold, even for the soft, spongy foot of the camel. No attempt seems to have been made to construct a few steps or hollows to aid the beasts of burden. Like all the roads, or rather wretched tracks, in this country, nothing is done to overcome the natural obstacles in the way. It was painful to see the way in which the camels slid backwards sometimes, and,

trembling in every joint, tried in vain to recover themselves. One or two of them fell, and the wonder to me was how they ever reached the summit of the pass. There was an immense old white camel, with a heavy, drooping under lip, that was a favourite with us, and the way in which it made its way up, with our heavy tent and appendages on its back, excited our admiration.

The view from the summit of this weary pass is fine, for you look back along the great expanse of the Arabah, with the dark purple mountains of Edom in the far-distant horizon, while, turning to the left, you survey the uplands and blue hills of Palestine. The extreme southern end of the Dead Sea was distinctly visible, a long white salt marsh, extending from the margin of the water for a considerable distance into the valley. We were now bidding farewell to our actual desert wanderings, for very soon we should be amongst the rolling grassy mounds of Judæa, all gay with crimson anemones and endless varieties of beautiful wild flowers. Instead of the wild forms of the wandering children of Ishmael, with their dark flashing eyes and fierce looks, we were coming among the treacherous Turks and pale, downcast-looking Jews. The feeling of isolation from civilised man, and of utter solitude amongst the grand works of nature, which is so fascinating in its way, would soon be lost amidst the sights of populous towns and the bustle of modern hotels. Newspapers and letters would once more worry the traveller, not yet satiated with the charms of life in the wilderness, and his desert costume must give place to the hot, stifling dress which

fashion prescribes. No longer can he sit under his tent door, without coat or waistcoat, and, above all, the restriction of a linen collar, or stroll into the camp in the most *négligé* costume. Propriety and etiquette again resume their wonted sway, and soon we must say good-bye to our faithful attendants, who had journeyed so far from their fellows and haunts.

For the better part of a day we traversed the bleak, stony territory and gravelly slopes which conduct to the commencement of what is usually styled the Holy Land. About four o'clock in the afternoon of March 25 we stopped for our evening meal at a spot where there was abundance of grass, and many green shrubs of a different type from any we had yet seen. All that day we had been keeping an anxious look-out for Arabs, but it was not till we began to prepare for dinner that they appeared. We first of all saw a large herd of goats feeding on a hill side, and soon after a number of their owners, both men and women, came up and entered into conversation with our followers. To keep matters smooth, Achmet purchased a kid, which was forthwith killed and dressed, for the benefit, principally, of our visitors. After dinner we resolved, as the night was extremely fine and calm, to make another moonlight march, and took with us one of our new allies to act as guide. It was delightfully cool, and the route was over smooth ground, which was specially suitable for the camels. We now journeyed over excellent soil, cultivated with care, and the early grain was more than half a foot high in most places. The stones and rocks had

disappeared, and traces of the husbandman could everywhere be seen.

Still our Arabs seemed to be excessively anxious to get away from this neighbourhood, and marched forward with a persistence and energy which showed they distrusted the locality. Not one of them uttered a word, but with their noiseless footstep and swinging walk rapidly got over the ground. In the somewhat misty moonlight we could see that the country we traversed was characterised by grassy hills and cultivated slopes, but with hardly any trees or shrubs. Every half-hour or so we appeared to pass near a village or encampment, to judge by the barking of dogs and occasional calls and whistling from the inhabitants, but no one came near us. Thus silently did we steal along, the very camels seeming to be aware that they were to keep quiet, for they stalked on without uttering more than an occasional moan if any one was forced to kneel down for an instant. The moon after a while shone with brilliant lustre, and there was a degree of excitement in thus steadily urging on our way amidst the habitations of the unfriendly people around us. A constant barking of dogs was kept up on either side of our track, but generally it sounded a long way off, and, apparently, the denizens of the villages seemed quite inclined to let us alone.

Towards midnight we evidently passed into the rich pastoral land of Judæa, for all around us was the luxuriant grass and flowery herbs of a fertile soil. On we went over those rolling verdant hills, or along shallow valleys, carpeted with

turf, with an occasional field of corn between, until, at three in the morning, we called a halt, to give the camels some food and rest. Their loads were taken off, their forelegs tied together, and the animals were allowed to stray wherever they pleased, while we got out our mattresses and blankets, and lay down on the grass to sleep for a couple of hours. I slept soundly and awoke at half-past five, when the sun was just rising. A very heavy dew lay upon the ground, and our hair was quite wet with it, but we were greatly refreshed by our brief interval of repose. The cook soon had a fire lit, and we had a cup of tea with some bread, and by half-past six were again on the march for Hebron. From this point we journeyed quietly on through a pleasant, pastoral country, where the patriarchs of old fed their flocks, and every half-mile or so we came upon great herds of sheep and goats intermingled, guarded by a boy or a man, aided by two or three dogs. Richer and more flowery grew the grassy meads, which were now scented with the pleasant odour of aromatic shrubs and painted by the variegated tints of the brilliant anemone, the pale lily, the simple daisy, the scented poppy, the speckled tulip, the small white star of Bethlehem, and many others.

After marching through this beautiful country for four or five hours we found ourselves confronted by an abrupt and stony ascent, which leads to the higher plateau of fertile land in the more immediate vicinity of Hebron. On arriving at the summit of this pass, we saw before us the rocky eminences surrounding that ancient city, with a large intervening tract

of country, over which we must pass before our long day's march would be over. The landscape is different in character from that I have been describing. There is abundance of grass, but rocks and stones crop out all over its surface, while in the shallow wadys between the hills numerous patches of grain are to be seen. Our guides now decidedly lost their reckoning, for we were assured that a large town on the slope of a hill some four miles off was Hebron. But after toiling across many fields, and over rough stone walls enclosing them, it was announced that we were all wrong, and must make a long *détour*. As our sheikh confidently professed to be familiar with the road, Mr. Ashton thought he would follow him up a narrow valley full of olive and fig trees, which winds into the mountains round about Hebron, but Mr. Gere and I preferred to stick to our dragoman. The result proved that we were right, for our fellow traveller and the sheikh had a toilsome and hot climb to get out of the devious ravine in which they found themselves.

It was past six o'clock at night when we slowly wound round the stony slopes of the olive-clad hills near Hebron. It lies in so sheltered a situation that, until you are within a few hundred yards of its first houses, you see little or nothing to indicate that the most ancient city in the world, save Damascus, is close at hand. On rounding the shoulder of a range of hills, you emerge upon a succession of cornfields and vineyards, many of them fenced with substantial walls, and having a stone tower for defence. They lie in a valley which you traverse for some time, and then, at a turn in the

miserable track, you see before you the town built on the slope of a hill. Venerable olive and oak trees grow sometimes in groves, and sometimes in the midst of a patch of grain or a vineyard. After traversing the wretched rocky track, or rather path for mules, the town is suddenly seen compact, white, and picturesquely situated, its lower extremity resting in the famed 'Valley of Eschol,' so noted for its grapes. The houses are built of stone, mostly flat-roofed, but in some may be observed a low dome surmounting the walls. The lofty, massive walls of the Haram, which encloses within its sacred precincts the 'Cave of Machpelah,' where rest the bones of Abraham and others of the patriarchs, form a conspicuous object in the town.

Hebron, from its ancient history and early importance, is frequently mentioned in Holy Writ; and here were transacted many very prominent events, both in patriarchal and subsequent times. First known as 'Kirjath Arba,' it was afterwards called Mamre, and was made memorable by the residence in its valley of the great 'Father of many nations.' By its later name of Hebron the city was appointed to be one of the six cities of refuge, and was afterwards the chosen seat of David's government. The sweet singer of Israel dwelt here for more than seven years, but it ceased after that to be of much note as a capital, and fell into decay. After the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, the city was restored, but became the spoil of the Edomites, and in due course fell under Roman sway. The Crusaders held possession of Hebron for two centuries, during which time, A.D.

1167, it became the seat of a Latin bishopric, but finally came under the conquering rule of the followers of Islam, who have retained it ever since.

We passed by the large pool, confined within walls of massive stone, which supplies the inhabitants with water. It is square, about 150 feet on each side, and 50 feet deep, and must be of very ancient construction, for it is mentioned in the Book of Samuel. There is another pool a considerable distance north of the foregoing, but of much smaller dimensions, 85 feet by 55. As we defiled past the larger pool, some of the Jewish inhabitants of the city came up and saluted Achmet as though they knew him. It being thought better that we should not pitch our tents in such close vicinity to the city, it was arranged that we were to stay all night in the house of a Jew, who seems to keep a kind of odging-house for travellers. This house is not far from the arge pool, and has a pleasant view from its roof over the town and surrounding hills, but its interior is by no means of the cleanest description. We walked along a very narrow passage, and then up some steep stairs, till we came to a room with a divan of stone running round three of its sides. Upon these our rugs and wraps were arranged, so as to improvise a tolerably comfortable sleeping-place, had it not been for the unceasing attention of multitudes of fleas with which the house was infested. Several young and not bad-looking Jewish girls now appeared on the scene, dressed in gay-coloured jackets, with a good deal of jewellery about their heads and fingers, through whose agency a rather non-

descript meal was, after long delay, served up. The principal dish was a huge mess of eggs, cooked something after the fashion of an omelette, and eaten with bread, while some of the wine of Hebron accompanied the repast. This wine has a certain name for excellence, but it did not commend itself to our palates. However, as we were tired and hungry, we made the best of our indifferent entertainment, and after a while tried to sleep off the fatigues of the day, but had a wretched night of it, thanks to our numerous assailants.

Next morning, accompanied by Achmet and a local guide, we set off to see the town, though there is but little of much interest to visit, owing to the great attraction of Hebron, the cave of Machpelah being rigidly closed against all travellers. The Prince of Wales, accompanied by Dean Stanley, was allowed in 1862 to inspect certain portions of the mosque built over the cave; and Mr. Fergusson, author of a well-known work on architecture; and, at a later period, the Marquis of Bute did succeed in gaining admission to the sanctuary. The interior of the mosque is described as handsome; it has a lofty nave and aisles supported by many columns. Massive silver gates lead into the chapels of Abraham and Sarah, and the shrines of Isaac and Rebecca are pointed out. A hole in the pavement pierces through the natural rock, forming the roof of the cave, and a coarse iron lamp sheds an indistinct light down into the gloomy recesses of the cavern, allowing nothing of interest to be seen. The exterior walls of the Haram, as this mosque is called, are

formed of very massive stones of bevelled architecture, some of them nearly 40 feet long. In length this wall extends nearly 200 feet, and upwards of 50 in height, and is crowned with a poor-looking Saracenic addition, with a minaret at each end. A long flight of stairs, entered by an iron door in the eastern side, conducts to the area within, at the southern end of which is the mosque, which Mr. Fergusson considers may have been erected towards the beginning of the thirteenth century. Externally, certainly the Haram has a very venerable appearance, with its enormous old stones and mouldering pilasters; while from interstices in the walls many creeping and flowering shrubs hang their verdant streamers to the passing breeze.

Having looked into a deep fissure in a portion of the rock which protrudes through the wall, a little distance inside the gate, and being assured that in the thick gloom beyond was the veritable cave of Machpelah, we set off to inspect the glass works which have existed for a long time in Hebron. The works are situated in a gloomy, cavernous-looking building, more like a cellar than anything else, in one of the narrow, dirty streets of the town. A few half-naked dusky men are seen brandishing iron rods, at the end of which are the masses of red-hot glass that they extract from the glowing furnace before them. The articles produced are drinking vessels, glasses, and various glass ornaments, chiefly bangles for the wrist and ankles, a few of which I purchased. These are certainly superior to the trinkets of similar manufacture which one sees at the bazaars on the Nile. We did

not linger long here, as may be supposed, but took a further stroll through the town, and then reclined under the shade of some old olive trees, waiting till our animals were ready to start for Jerusalem. Our faithful camels were to accompany us no farther, and we took leave of the Arabs who had attended us all the way from Akabah, giving them the usual small *backsheesh* in addition to the stipulated payment. Achmet had engaged some horses and mules to take our baggage, and at first one rather missed the comfortable soft seat, built up of rugs and wraps, on the camel's back.

It was about mid-day when we set off along the rough, rocky mule track which conducts you past the famous old oak tree, known as 'Abraham's Oak,' a mile or so west of Hebron. This ancient tree, the last representative of the oaks of Mamre, is some 23 feet in girth, and is situated in a garden a little way off the road. I cannot say it has a particularly imposing appearance, but it certainly has a venerable air of antiquity. Near this are the ruins supposed to be the site of Mamre, now called Rameh, consisting of a few massive stones which once formed part of a fine basilica erected by Constantine, and close by is 'Abraham's Well.' Various other remains of towers and fortresses are scattered about the hills in the vicinity of Hebron, and all this country has been the scene of numerous battles and encounters during the warfare which formerly harassed Judæa. The scenery is bleak, bare, and uninteresting—low, rocky hills, scantily clad with grass and cornfields on some of their slopes, with an occasional shrub or fig tree to relieve the view.

About four o'clock we reached the celebrated Pools of Solomon, which remain to this day an astonishing proof of the magnificent enterprise of the wise king. The upper one is 380 feet long, 236 feet broad, and 25 feet deep, but there was no water in it, though Achmet said he had never seen it dry before. The others are still larger in dimensions, and the three are fed by springs in the surrounding hills. It occurred to me that the masonry was not quite so massive as one might have expected, nor have these structures so very venerable an appearance. Aqueducts have of late years been discovered, built at three different levels, so that if one failed the others remained, by which the water was conveyed from these immense reservoirs to Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Bethlehem and its neighbourhood still derive their chief supply of water from Solomon's Pools. The latter are partially excavated out of the rocky valley, and are formed at three different heights, while an external channel conveys the water to each of the pools. Jerusalem still is partly supplied with water from these reservoirs, by one of the aqueducts which leads into Mount Moriah. Close to the upper pool is a large square building without any roof, and whose walls, seemingly of Saracenic construction, are strong and solid, but there is no special history attached to it.

The face of the country has now a more clothed and picturesque appearance, while oaks, arbutus, and other trees give a green look to the valleys. That the country was once well cultivated may be seen by the numerous walls running along the slopes of the hills, that supported the

terraces in whose soil the vines and grain were grown. Our feelings were now being gradually wrought up to a high pitch of anticipation, as we were rapidly nearing the spot from which we should catch sight of the Holy City, whose hallowed memories are so deeply interwoven in the thoughts of all who trust for salvation in the blood of Him who died for our sins. I felt a thrill as the name of Bethlehem was pronounced by Achmet, who pointed out the distant white flat-roofed houses and walls of a small town situated on a green hill-side, as the sacred birthplace of Our Blessed Lord. It is surrounded with vineyards and fruitful gardens, with numerous olive trees dotting the slopes of the hills that bound the view to the east.

Our road now grew steeper and broader, having decidedly the appearance of more traffic upon it, and some attempts have been made to overcome the natural obstacles it presented. We presently came up to a very plain white structure, whose name inspires deep interest, for it is 'Rachel's Tomb.' The touching narrative of the death of the dearly-loved wife of Jacob indicates the spot with much minuteness, and one of the saddest incidents which befell the wily patriarch during his chequered career is commemorated by this sepulchre. Certainly there is little of interest externally in the unornamented building, which is crowned by a dome, and on looking through a small hole in the wall, all that I could see inside was a rude sarcophagus, apparently covered with plaster. There is a well close to the tomb, from which two very pretty Jewish girls were drawing water, and a little beyond is seen a fertile

valley, full of fine olive trees, with a small village planted on its western slope.

We now were on the high road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and met a good many travellers of various nationalities clad in their distinguishing costumes. Many of those whom we saw seemed to be prosperous inhabitants of Jerusalem, mounted on prancing horses, whose paces they seemed fond of showing off. We observed also a few good new-looking houses on the roadside, standing in fields of grain, with olive trees about them, and substantial stone walls in some places bound the road on each side. The road now mounted up a steep ascent, at the summit of which stands the convent of Mar Elias, a building of considerable size and solid construction, near which Elijah is said to have been miraculously sustained on his flight from Samaria. Here the traveller stops and reverently takes a last look at the distant white houses of Bethlehem, with its venerable church erected over the birthplace of Our Lord, and then, moving a few paces on, the first view is obtained of the city of the Great King. This is by no means the best point from which to view Jerusalem for the first time, because hardly anything is seen of the actual city, owing to the intervening hill of Evil Counsel, which shuts it out. Still the summit of Mount Zion is visible, crowned with the white walls of the Armenian convent, the great dome of the mosque of Omar, and the Mount of Olives beyond; while in front are the embattled Saracenic walls, near the Jaffa gate, with the grey tower of Hippicus. Outside the walls the immense white Russian convent is seen,

and the rocky ridge concealing the valley of Hinnom, between which and the convent of Mar Elias is the cultivated 'plain of Rephaim,' where David overcame the Philistines.

We gazed in reverent silence upon Jerusalem, within whose embattled walls is the scene of the death of the Son of God for the sins of a guilty world, and whose valleys and rocks have been trodden so oft by His feet. Here He went about to seek and save the lost, healing the sick, and warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. Clad in poor attire, with humble, unlettered men for His followers, He offered a priceless diadem to those who would accept the gracious gift from His hands. Within the walls, where once the wise king of Israel reigned in splendour, a 'Greater than Solomon' taught the wondering multitudes. The pure white lilies, which deck the sides of yonder Mount of Olives, furnished Him with a deathless commentary upon the vanity of the earthly glory of even so mighty a potentate as Solomon. Within sight of the rocks from which Jeremiah uttered forth his inspired denunciations against a guilty city, a mightier far than he wept tears of sorrow over doomed Jerusalem. Yes! before us lay the great city of David, which so often has been assailed during the world's history by the vast hosts of many nations.

Here came the all-conquering Alexander, flushed with the subjugation of the Persian Empire, and did obeisance to the High Priest, whose God, he said, had in a dream foretold the conquest he should achieve. After enjoying for a season the great Macedonian's sway, Jerusalem fell under the power of

the Ptolemies, and the haughty Syrian Antiochus established his power in the city of David when the Egyptian rule was overthrown. Then came the noble struggle of the Maccabees, who for a season triumphed over the invader and once more established the kingdom of Judæa. Pompey the Great, at the head of the invincible Roman legions, placed the proud ensigns of the mistress of the world upon the walls and towers of Jerusalem, and for well-nigh six centuries, with one or two brief interludes, the Imperial sway was acknowledged by the Jews. During that period, in A.D. 72, the memorable siege by Titus occurred, when almost every building in the city was destroyed, except the still-standing tower of Hippicus and two others. Then after the final decline of mighty Rome, the cruel rule of the infidel Moslems began with the capture of the city in A.D. 636 by Caliph Omar. A transient season of glory, under the chivalrous reign of the Crusaders, cast a gleam of light upon the gloom which now settled over the city, and again the true worship of Jehovah was celebrated in His own chosen habitation. But soon the sceptre fell from the feeble hands of the successors to the gallant Godfrey, and in 1243 the banner of the Cross ceased to wave over the walls of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XI.

JERUSALEM.

We entered the city by the Jaffa gate, and after trying in vain to find quarters in the Mediterranean Hotel, near Mount Zion, we were fortunate in getting excellent accommodation at the house of Mr. Max Ungar, who keeps a lodging-house not very far from the Damascus gate. He can accommodate about six or eight people, and we were made very comfortable during our short stay in the Holy City, at a scale of charges considerably less than that of the hotels. One of our first visits was to Mr. Bergheim, the banker, to get letters and a supply of money, while our dragoman, who had engaged a guide for us, went to arrange matters with the muleteers, or *mukharis*, as they are called, who were to attend us for the remainder of our tour. Mr. Ashton and I, who were both furnished with letters of introduction to the Bishop of Jerusalem, Dr. Gobat, went to pay our respects to him, and were received with cordial courtesy. The bishop resides in a handsome white stone house, nearly opposite the ancient tower of Hippicus, and close to the elegant church which has been erected for the Christian converts and

visitors. The church and adjoining buildings are the property of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, and services are conducted by the bishop and assistants in several languages, for the benefit of different proselytes and visitors. There is a daily Hebrew service early in the morning, and on Sundays there are two English services, at 10 forenoon and half-past 7 evening. The German service is at 3 o'clock afternoon in winter, and on Wednesdays at 7 evening. The Society employs three ordained missionaries, besides lay agents, and their boys' and girls' school has nearly 100 children on its rolls; besides which there is a Diocesan school and orphanage, the Prussian Deaconesses girls' school, and Miss Gobat's school for Arab girls. These, however, do not exhaust the number of Christian agencies, for there is the Church Missionary Society, who occupy the Arabic Chapel, where service in that language is held every Sunday morning, and this Society employs an ordained and lay missionary. In addition to which Mr. Schneller's Home for Orphans, a hospital and dispensary in connection with the London Jews' Society, and the 'Hebrew Christian Mutual Aid Society,' all do good and useful work. The latter puts forth special claims, as it was founded by Hebrew Christians for the object of relieving the necessities of these poorer Christians, who have, owing to their conversion, been deprived of their former means of support.

The population of Jerusalem consists of some 18,000, of whom about 9,000 are Jews and 4,000 Christians; the

former have eight synagogues and nearly forty smaller places of worship. The Mohammedans have eleven mosques, the largest of which is the celebrated mosque of Omar, on Mount Moriah. The Jews are divided into two main sects, the Ashkanasim and the Sephardim, the latter being of Spanish origin, and their dialect is in that language, rather corrupted from its original purity. The latter sect are subject to the Sultan, but are allowed to enjoy their own rabbinical laws; while the Ashkanasim are mostly of German and Polish origin, and being foreigners, are subject to their own consular agents. Both these sects and the stragglers from various countries who are attracted to Jerusalem, are mainly supported by contributions from their more prosperous brethren in Europe. Of the Christian sects, the Greek is the most important, numbering over 1,500 adherents, who are all native Arabs, having for their head the Patriarch of Jerusalem. This dignitary resides in the convent at Jerusalem, and has fourteen sees subject to his rule. He, his clergy and monks, are mostly natives of the Grecian islands. The Armenians, some 300 in number, have also their patriarch, who resides in their splendid convent on Mount Zion, and is spiritual head of the entire sect in Palestine. The Latins are chiefly Syrians, and speak Arabic; they are very generally seceders from the Greek Church, and they also have their patriarch, or 'warden,' who has fourteen convents under his jurisdiction. Besides the above, there are a small number of Georgians, Copts, and Syrians among the Christian population of the Holy City.

As our stay was to be very limited, we set off first to get a general idea of the city by making a *détour* of a considerable part of the walls, ascending to their summit near the Jaffa gate. There is a regular ledge of stone forming a good walk for most part of the way, only that at the numerous angles in the wall you have generally to descend and ascend again by narrow stairs. On our right hand, inside the walls, the Christian quarter is mainly situated, and it ends about the Damascus gate. Here are several of the Greek convents, and in many parts there are considerable unoccupied spaces of ground, which are cultivated with grain and vegetables. In the immediate vicinity of the walls are seen the extensive hospices and gardens belonging to the Russian convent. The sun was intensely hot, and we were glad of any shade which the projections of the walls afforded. On the other side of the extensive Damascus gate the Mohammedan quarter is reached, their cemetery being visible from the wall not far from the grotto of Jeremiah, and midway between this gate and the angle of the wall, where it overhangs the valley of Jehoshaphat, is the small closed gate of Herod. We now kept along the top of the eastern wall, having the Mount of Olives on our left rising from the valley of Jehoshaphat, which runs parallel with the old walls until they take a bend to the west, not far from the mosque El Aksa. Proceeding along the eastern wall for some distance, the hill Bezetha is passed on the right, a broad rocky ridge, partly covered with olive-groves. Close to St. Stephen's Gate is seen, situated a short

distance within the walls, the traditional pool of Bethesda. This is a large hollow, like an old quarry, with broken-down walls, whose stones have partially filled the open space, one of its sides being part of the northern end of the Haram. A little water trickles into it from a small stream, but there is no pool in the ordinary sense of the word.

We now proceeded outside of the city walls by passing through St. Stephen's Gate, and we were here struck by the massive character of the masonry of the wall. About this point it is probable that the substratum of the great enclosure of the Haram begins, for the bevelled stones are venerable in appearance and carefully finished. The Haram covers a vast portion of ground, the whole of Mount Moriah in fact, its eastern side being 1,530 feet in length, though its breadth is not much more than 900 feet. This great area was the site of Solomon's Temple, and is an immense artificial work or platform of masonry built upon huge walls and a solid substructure. The topmost ridge of rock, nearly in the centre of this platform, which was once the threshing-floor of Araunah, is now covered over by the gorgeous fabric of the mosque of Omar. These great stones above described are probably part of the foundation of Solomon's Temple, and painted letters, of Phœnician character apparently, have been recently discovered on some of the stones.

The now closed Golden Gate, directly facing the Mount of Olives in the eastern wall, is the principal feature of this part of the city walls. It has a double portal and semicircular arches, and a handsome entablature enriched by Corinthian

capitals. The sides of the valley of Jehoshaphat here are very steep, and upon the other bank of the dry bed of the brook Kedron is seen the reputed Garden of Gethsemane, with its very ancient olive trees. Continuing our walk, we noticed that a small Turkish cemetery extended between the path and the lofty walls, and at one or two of the tombs there were gathered family groups bewailing the dead. All along this part of the wall, as far as the south-east angle, very massive, finely-hewn stones are observed, some of them nearly 20 feet long and 7 feet high, and the 'chief corner-stones' are of still larger dimensions. Near this angle of the wall, on the opposite side of the valley of Jehoshaphat, are seen the tombs of Absalom, St. James, and Zechariah; and the whole slopes of the valley from this point are covered with the white tombstones, merely laid flat upon the ground, which point out the resting-places of many generations of Jews.

Our path now skirted the south wall over the ridge of the hill Ophel, which overhangs the pool of Siloam and the fountain of the Virgin, not far from the village of the same name. Having passed this point, from which we got a distant view of the blue mountains of Moab, we now crossed the depression known as the Tyropœon Valley, and near which is the foundation of a great arch, discovered by Dr. Robinson, that once spanned the valley. This arch formerly led from the Temple platform to Mount Zion, and was the scene of the parley between Titus and the last heroic defenders of the stronghold of King David. This part of the city is now the Jewish quarter, while beyond it, on the extreme summit of

Mount Zion, the Armenians congregate. We re-entered the city by the Zion gate, having thus made the circuit of almost the entire walls of Jerusalem, except the western portion, overhanging the valley of Hinnom. Near this gate a small colony of lepers have established themselves, as they are not permitted to mingle with the inhabitants, and they lie about on the waste ground below the walls, wretched-looking objects, on whom the traveller may well bestow a small donation. The handsome Armenian convent, situated on Mount Zion, should certainly be visited. It contains accommodation for nearly 3,000 pilgrims, besides quarters for the monks and students who attend the seminary established of late years within its walls. The convent was founded by the Georgians, to whom it formerly belonged, in the eleventh century, and the church of St. James, erected upon the reputed site of the martyrdom of that apostle, is the largest, except the Holy Sepulchre, in the city. Upon entering, the traveller will be struck both by the richness and want of taste in the decorations of the church. The lower parts of the walls and pillars are covered with coarse porcelain tiles, but the woodwork is richly gilt, and some of the panelling is veneered with tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl, which has a curious effect. A number of wretched oil-paintings hang on the walls, and numerous ostrich eggs and shabby oil lamps are suspended from the roof. There are sundry relics of extremely dubious authenticity, exhibited for the edification of the credulous, and crowds of pilgrims were streaming in and out of the narrow portals of the church.

At this season Jerusalem is thronged with pilgrims from all parts of the oriental world, who come to celebrate the Easter services in the Holy City. Wherever we went we met numbers of them, and especially do they congregate in and about the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Next day, being Good Friday, we went to service in the English church, and found a large congregation assembled. The first part of the service was in English, conducted by an Anglican clergyman, and then a baptismal service, in German, was held, at which five young men were admitted into church membership by the bishop's assistant, who subsequently preached the sermon in English. The bishop himself read the communion service, but took no other part in the conducting of worship. There were a number of English present, amongst whom I recognised several Cairo friends. After service, Mr. Ashton and I walked down the *Via Dolorosa*, a narrow street conducting from the church of the Sepulchre through the heart of the city. Up this street Our Saviour is reputed to have walked on His way from Pilate's Judgment Hall to Mount Calvary, and the monks have placed the scenes of various striking incidents in this mournful progress of Our Lord at different parts of the steep, uneven road. There is the spot where He was scourged; the spot where Pilate brought Him forth and said, 'Behold the man;' the wall against which He leaned, fainting under the cross; the scene of His falling again, when a handkerchief was presented by Saint Veronica and miraculously retained the

impression of His features; besides other traditional 'holy places' of equal authenticity.

From this we proceeded to the Jews' place of wailing, which is situated at the extreme eastern end of the Jewish quarter, where it meets the wall of the Haram, not far from the spring of the before-mentioned arch over the Tyropœon Valley. It is an oblong piece of pavement, having on one side a low modern wall, and on the other the massive, venerable stones of the ancient wall surrounding the Temple. Here the Jews of both sexes assemble, and with their faces turned to the old walls, so sacred in their eyes, they moan in a low tone over their lost glory and state of bondage, occasionally kissing the stones in their paroxysms of grief. I must confess I was not specially impressed with the spectacle, which appeared to me a very formal act of mechanical sorrow, without any great reality or mournfulness about it. The men, who seemed to be Spanish and Polish Jews, were seated with their backs against the modern wall, and they read passages from the Psalms in a monotonous voice, while a few women were seen silently bending over the ancient stones.

We now turned our steps towards Siloam, passing out of the city through the so-called Dung Gate, and descending the Tyropœon Valley, soon reached the celebrated pool. It is in a ruinous condition, its sides falling in, and the staircase leading down to the water rapidly crumbling away. The pool is about 50 feet long and 20 deep, and a stream of clear water, emerging from a dark arched recess at one end,

covers the bottom to a depth of a few inches. This archway conducts by a narrow low passage, which was traversed with great difficulty by Dr. Robinson, to the fountain of the Virgin, a distance of 1,750 feet. Proceeding from this spot up the dry bed of the Kedron, we examined the four tombs of Absalom, Zechariah, St. James, and Jehoshaphat. They are hewn in the rock, and are of considerable size, that of Absalom being 54 feet in height, and its square sides measure 22 feet each way. Externally it is decorated with columns and pilasters, surmounted by a lofty cylindrical apex, which comes to a point representing a tuft of palm leaves. From the cornice upwards the monument is constructed of masonry, and its lower part is hollowed out into a chamber 8 feet square, half-full of stones thrown into it, through an aperture, by all devout Jews who pass this way. The other three tombs have no very specially interesting architectural features, and the great antiquity attributed to some of them rests on doubtful authority.

Still keeping up the valley of Jehoshaphat, we reached, at a point in the slope of the Mount of Olives, nearly opposite the Golden Gate, one of the most profoundly touching and sacred of all the sites around Jerusalem, the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a square enclosure, surrounded by a high white wall, over which are seen the dark and venerable forms of the olive trees, eight in number, which for hundreds of years have shaded the reputed scene of Our Saviour's agony. Whether this is the very identical spot where Our Lord endured His terrible woe, matters comparatively little, for it

is certain that it must have been, if not here, only a short distance either up or down the valley. But surely no Christian who realises the truth of the awful events which took place in this retired spot, can fail to approach it without feelings of intense and reverential interest. A Latin monk conducts you round the garden, in whose walls, with wretched taste, there have recently been erected several praying stations of the usual Roman Catholic type adorned with tawdry pictures protected by glass. The monk also shows you, a few paces beyond, the 'Grotto of Agony,' and the identical places where the apostles fell asleep while their Master was praying in His agony.

Having arranged to ride to Bethlehem on the following day about noon, we devoted the morning to a visit to the mosque of Omar. You get admission through the British Consul, Mr. Moore, whose invariable courtesy to all travellers who pay him a visit is so well known. He sends a 'Kawass,' as the consular official is termed, who arranges matters with the guards at the gates, and sees that you are not annoyed by any fanatical Turk. Unluckily it was a pouring wet morning, one of the two wet days which we had during our entire tour, but we made the best of it. An old gateway admits to the great interior square of the Haram, the undoubted site of the Temple area, and the spot where Solomon's magnificent edifice once stood. At the first glance, the immense enclosure, 1,530 feet by 922, looks like a great grassy park, with ancient buildings on all sides, and the noble octagonal mosque in the centre. Although a

large portion of the area is paved, the grass springs up so abundantly between the stones that it has quite a fresh, verdant look. We are now traversing Mount Moriah, and under that fine dome is the naked summit of the rock, the actual threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

The great mosque of Omar, as the vast dome crowning the highest part of the enclosure is called, is approached by a handsome staircase, which conducts to a platform raised above that we have just traversed. I must admit a feeling of disappointment with the mosque, which, though very large, has not the solid, majestic appearance of the grand Christian fanes of Europe. The mosque was popularly supposed to have been founded by Caliph Omar when he entered the city after a long siege at the head of his Moslem army in the year 636. The story goes that he enquired where the Jewish temple stood, and being directed to Mount Moriah, he gave orders to erect a mosque there, right over the sacred pinnacle of rock. To the Moslem chief Abd-el-Melek is now generally ascribed the erection of the famous Kubbet-es-Sakhra, or 'Dome of the Rock,' A.D. 686. It is octagonal in shape, each side measuring 67 feet, and the lower portions of the walls are composed of slabs of marble, above which is a covering of bright-coloured glazed tiles, the whole crowned with a dome of wood covered with lead, and surmounted by a gilt crescent. Many parts of the exterior have a dilapidated look, from some of the slabs of marble and arabesque tiles having fallen away. The interior is 148 feet in diameter, and is exceedingly dark, so that it is difficult to

see the dimensions to good effect. Two concentric rows of columns support the roof, and light is gained by fifty-six pointed windows filled with rich stained glass, and there is a profusion of gilding throughout the interior. Probably some of the columns and marble slabs formed part of the decorations of Herod's palace.

Right under the dome is seen the naked irregular surface of the rock, which once was the site of the great altar of burnt offering. This, the veritable 'threshing-floor of Araunah,' is surrounded with a low wall of marble, and here, as marking the site of their former temple, the Jews were accustomed to wail during the fourth century. The surface of the rock is about 60 feet across and 5 feet high, and it has always been looked upon as a peculiarly sacred spot in Moslem eyes. We descended to the cave or grotto below, which is nearly 7 feet high, and is supposed to have been a sort of reservoir for receiving the blood and water from the altar of burnt offering above.

From this point we now proceeded to examine the fine mosque El Aksa, at the south-west corner of the Haram enclosure. It is supposed to have originally been built as a basilica by Justinian in the middle of the sixth century, but it has certainly been considerably altered by Moslem architects. Fergusson, however, maintains that the structure is entirely Mohammedan, having been built by Caliph Abd-el-Melek at the close of the seventh century. It has the form of a basilica of seven aisles, and is 272 feet long by 184 feet wide, the roof being supported by forty-five massive columns.

The interior is plain, the roof being merely beams of rough wood, and the whole building inside is spoilt through the fine pillars and stones being whitewashed over. Four different orders of architecture are observed in the capitals, several of the Corinthian ones being of white marble. We descended to a vault below the pavement, where are to be seen some very ancient-looking pillars and immense stones in the walls, apparently forming part of the Temple platform.

It was past one o'clock when we set off on horseback for Bethlehem, accompanied by Mr. Ungar, who kindly acted as our guide. We followed the same route as on our entry into Jerusalem, and turned off the road to Hebron, not far from Rachel's tomb. The hill-sides all around the city of the Nativity of Our Lord are covered with green terraces, where olives, vines and fig trees grow in profusion. The town occupies the ridge of a hill, and its flat-roofed houses are huddled close together, after the true Eastern fashion. It has a population of over 4,000 inhabitants, who are all Christians, and the women are celebrated for their beauty. Many hallowed associations cluster round this romantically-situated town. Here the touching incident of Ruth's sojourn will be remembered, and on these green hill-sides the youthful David kept his father's sheep, and at a subsequent period he refused to drink of the water of the famous well near the city, which his faithful followers had succeeded in procuring, though the Philistine army lay around the place. The ruthless Herod crimsoned the streets of Bethlehem with the blood of the massacred children, when a great cry was heard,

'lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.' And here One was born into the world, amidst the lowliest surroundings, though an angel host heralded His advent with song of joy, who was to save unto the uttermost all 'who came to Him through faith.'

The church of the Nativity, an enormous grey pile of masonry, and the oldest Christian building in the world, was built by the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, in the year 327. It is divided into a nave 120 feet long, and double aisles on each side; the columns are of marble, and the walls were once adorned with rich mosaics. The basilica is unfortunately common property among the Greek, Latin and Armenian churches, consequently it is neglected, and much out of repair in some parts. There are several chapels at the east end, from which you descend to the grotto said to be the actual birthplace of Our Saviour. It is a low vault, hewn in the rock, about 38 feet long by 11 feet wide, and it seems difficult to believe that it was once connected with an inn or caravansery. The manger is entirely concealed by a slab of marble, shaped somewhat like an altar, with sides and a ledge in front, so as to preserve the traditional form. A silver star in the pavement denotes the spot where Our Lord was thus laid in His lowly cradle, and an inscription in Latin says, 'Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.' Sixteen silver lamps are hung over the manger, and the whole surface of the rock is concealed by heavy brocaded silk cloth. There were many pilgrims thronging in and out of the sacred grotto, who knelt down with

most reverent devotion and kissed the surface of the marble, and often breathed forth a fervent prayer while on their knees. No one can see this spot without emotion, which, whether the true site or not, has at any rate been the object of devout pilgrimages on the part of countless multitudes for more than fifteen centuries.

Other sacred places are shown to visitors; the 'milk-grotto,' where the Virgin and child were concealed from the fury of Herod; the chapel of Joseph, and the altar of the Innocents, erected over the spot where the children butchered by Herod were buried; but we did not stop long to examine them. It rained most of the way back to Jerusalem, as it had in fact done during the entire day, so I was not sorry to regain the comfortable shelter of our lodgings.

The following day was Sunday, and before morning service on Mount Zion, I visited the church of the Holy Sepulchre, where numerous pilgrims of all nations were assembled in great crowds. This venerable building was originally commenced by Constantine A.D. 326, and the fabric he erected was totally destroyed by the Persians in 614. Sixteen years later it was rebuilt, and was considerably larger than the first structure, says Porter, 'to accommodate the additional holy places that were gradually growing up round the sepulchre.' This second church, however, was destroyed in the year 1010 by Caliph Hakim, and another series of buildings was erected in 1048 over the site. The Crusaders, in 1099, remodelled the church, and added many new shrines. They also rebuilt the Rotunda, and placed a church on the

eastern side, on the site of Constantine's basilica. The western façade, with the present doorway and tower, were then built, and the chapel over Golgotha. Unfortunately, in 1808, a fire broke out in the Armenian chapel, and amongst other damage done, the roof of the Rotunda fell in upon the sepulchre, which was not injured internally however. The cupola also was rent in two, the roof of the church on the east destroyed, and other injuries caused, but the whole was carefully repaired in 1810 under the direction of a Greek architect.

A strange sight the pavement in front of the church exhibits at this season. Innumerable pilgrims congregate there, busily employed in purchasing relics from the vendors of such things as rosaries, beads, olive-wood ornaments made of wood grown at sundry spots of sacred ground, glass trinkets from Hebron, turquoise brooches, crosses innumerable, besides fruit, cakes, sweetmeats, and sundry other articles of merchandise. The façade of the church is best seen from this court, and it has a very venerable appearance, much crumbled away in its upper parts, and the fine *campanile* is rich with sculptured decorations. The tower originally had five stories, but is now reduced to three, and the principal doorway into the church is in its lowest story. This is a double doorway, adorned with a rich architrave, finely moulded arches, and a *relievo* representing Our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Turkish soldiers are here stationed to keep order among the crowds of pilgrims, who sometimes quarrel with one another, and passing them you find yourself before the 'Stone of Unction,' a slab of marble, with a railing

round it, covering the stone on which the body of Our Lord was anointed. Turning to the left you enter the Rotunda, 67 feet in diameter, and surmounted by a lofty dome, which is supported on eighteen strong piers. The dome was built about five years ago, and is richly gilt and painted of a pale blue colour. Under the centre of the dome stands the Holy Sepulchre, covered over with a fabric of yellow and white stone, decorated with pillars and pilasters, and itself surmounted with a dome. You enter first the 'chapel of the Angel,' where the heavenly messenger rested after rolling away the stone from the sepulchre. A small narrow doorway leads into the sepulchre itself, which is a square vault, about 6 feet each way, lighted up by the subdued rays of forty-three silver lamps, which are always kept burning. On the right is a marble ledge, about 2 feet high, fashioned somewhat like an altar, but sufficiently large to receive a human body, and here the body of Our Lord is said to have rested. A marble slab, with a crack right across its surface, covers the actual excavation in the rock, and the lips of countless pilgrims have worn away the hard stone. Many rich and costly offerings are seen in glass cases overhanging the altar, and a priest keeps watch over this sacred spot.

Subdued and solemn must be the feelings with which most men gaze upon a scene whose associations are of so awfully sacred a nature. However unsatisfactory the evidence undoubtedly is on which the tradition rests that here once lay the body of Our Blessed Lord, still there is an indefinable sanctity cast around the spot to which the steps of the

enthusiastic and the pious have ever been directed since the dawn of Christianity upon the world. Upon the more impulsive Eastern nature the impression produced by the sight of that smooth, worn marble slab is often overpowering. Reverently approaching it on bended knees, they kiss the marble over and over again, their tears bedewing it the while, and many a vow and prayer are there uttered of which death alone will mar the fulfilment. But it is difficult to linger long in this spot, for a crowd of pilgrims were stationed at the entrance, all eager to enter and behold where lay the body of their Lord.

It is impossible to attempt a description of the innumerable so-called sacred places which monkish superstition has located under the roof of the church of the Sepulchre. The scene of almost every incident which took place during the last day of Our Lord upon earth, before His resurrection, has been crowded under one roof. I will only refer to Golgotha, the 'place of a skull,' known to us as Mount Calvary, upon which a chapel is erected belonging to the Greeks, where is seen the cavity in the rock that held the cross. You ascend by a flight of stairs, and find yourself on the pavement covering the rock at an elevation of about 15 feet above the aisle of the church. At the eastern end of this pavement is an altar, beneath which a square aperture in the marble floor, covered with a silver grating, is seen, and within this is alleged to be the cavity in the rock where the cross stood. You are also shown the holes for the crosses of the thieves, and the rent made in the rock by the earthquake which occurred on that

awful day. The end of the chapel is a perfect blaze of costly offerings of a most elaborate nature—gold crosses, crucifixes, shields shaped like hearts, and other emblematical devices, are seen hanging in glass cases, besides many gems of great lustre and value. Inside one large case is a figure of the Virgin, loaded with splendid offerings of diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones. Here also were many pilgrims prostrating themselves before the altar and weeping over the supposed site of the cross.

After service in the Anglican church, we walked to the Protestant burying-ground, on the extreme verge of Mount Zion, overhanging the valley of Hinnom. There are very few English tombs, one of the most noticeable being to the memory of Bishop Alexander, the first prelate who occupied the see of Jerusalem. Returning again to the quarter of the city where we lodged, we set off to examine the Tombs of the Kings, outside the Damascus gate. These are interesting, though not presenting any special external feature, except a portion of what once must have been a highly ornamental frieze and cornice. The interior, to which access is gained by a low arched doorway cut in the rock, consists of a confused mass of small chambers opening out of one large hall. From this point we skirted the old walls and ascended to the summit of the Mount of Olives, getting a fine view of the entire city and environs on our way. The church of the Ascension, a modern building of small dimensions, and utterly devoid of interest, will not detain you long, and the absurdity of placing the scene here, when we are expressly told in Luke

that it took place at Bethany, is palpable to all. Not far from this spot a very interesting and elegant building has, within the last year or two, been erected by a pious French lady, the Princess De la Tour D'Auvergne, to commemorate the giving of the Lord's Prayer to the disciples. The building, which is built of fine white stone, is quadrangular in form, with a covered corridor, supported by graceful pillars, running round the interior open court. On the walls of this corridor are a series of tablets of glazed tiles, thirty-one in number, surrounded with an appropriate ornamental scroll or moulding. These tablets contain the Lord's Prayer in thirty-one different languages. Attached to the building is a small chapel, and a handsome tomb, adorned with a recumbent marble figure of the Princess, is placed against the side wall.

We now descended the Mount of Olives and visited the Tombs of the Prophets, situated in a field a short way down the hill. You enter a cave in the ground, and then go through a low aperture which leads to several narrow openings, where the bodies of the prophets may once have lain. Our guide assured us that he once penetrated one of these tunnels, with an American gentleman of an enquiring mind, a sufficient distance to occupy them eight hours altogether. We did not extend our walk any farther, but returned to our lodgings, rather fatigued with the sultry heat of the day, and made some preparations for our proposed journey next morning to Jericho and the Dead Sea.

At nine o'clock next morning we started, attended by our

faithful dragoman, our muleteers or *mukharis*, with their head man, a fine portly jovial specimen of his class, and one or two Arab protectors, as it is considered prudent to be accompanied by some of the supposed guardians of that part of Judæa. In addition to our three selves, our party consisted of Mr. J. Coysgarne Sim, of Coombe Wood, well known in the 'City' as head of an old-established firm, and a French gentleman, M. Poullard, with whom he had been travelling for a few days past. The day looked somewhat doubtful, but we only had two or three showers, after which it was as fine as possible. We left by St. Stephen's Gate, and skirted the slope of Olivet until we reached Bethany, a collection of poor hovels, picturesquely enough situated amidst vineyards and olive trees. You are shown the traditional house of Mary and Martha and the tomb of Lazarus, the latter situated at the end of a long and steep flight of stairs, which penetrate the earth for some distance. The house of the Sisters of Bethany is a mere heap of old stones, capitals, and portions of columns piled one above another, so as to form an appearance like the walls of a house. A very cursory examination of these two sites contented us, and we resumed our journey. We rested for an hour at Khan-el-Ahmah, where are some extensive ruins of an old caravansery, and found four or five other parties scattered about the ruins preparing for luncheon. Our way from this point lay between tolerably high, grassy mountains, with fringes of cultivation at their base. We met numerous Arabs and inhabitants of Jerusalem on the road, which is a much-frequented

one, and somewhat in better order than most of the tracks of Palestine. At length we caught sight of the great plain of Jericho through an opening in the hills, a little beyond the grand ravine called the Wady Kelt. This is a very deep glen, with precipitous sides of bare rock, in some parts of which grottoes may be observed that once sheltered anchorites of old.

The plain of the Jordan now is seen, extending right across from Jericho to the opposite ridge of lofty mountains, a broad flat expanse, with the green banks of the river sunk in a sort of hollow running along the centre of the plain. Our camping-place was not at the usual spot selected by most visitors to the site of Jericho, near the village of Riha, but was a mile or more nearer the river, which we were anxious to reach in good time next day. We walked to some rising ground, where you get a most extensive view of the plain and distant waters of the Dead Sea. There we found a regular congregation of tents occupied by sundry parties of English, Americans, Germans, and French, each nationality being distinguished by their flag. I encountered several friends among the occupants of the tents; one of them, an accomplished artist, whose facile brush was busily at work sketching the plain. The view is very beautiful; in the foreground a strip of green, with quantities of shrubs and trees, the broad valley beyond, with the rugged mountains of Moab which bound the plain, and the blue waters of the Dead Sea on the extreme right.

Next morning we made a very early start, and had a plea-

sant ride across the plain to the Jordan, which is quite concealed from view till you are within a hundred yards of it. The plain is smooth, with quantities of little thorny shrubs growing in it, but as we approached the river, the depression through which the latter runs becomes visible. Bushes and small trees grow thickly on its sandy surface, and the verge of the stream is densely clothed with an almost impenetrable thicket of willows, oleanders, fig and other trees. The stream itself is confined between clay banks, and is a rapid, rushing, muddy river, about twenty or thirty yards broad. We bathed our hands and heads in the water, and drank some of it, though it has not a particularly agreeable taste. As all travellers do, we brought away several bottles full of its water, and cut sundry sticks as mementoes of our visit, after which we took our departure for the Dead Sea. An hour or so brought us to the margin of the great lake, our ears, as we skirted the rapid stream, being regaled with the trilling of many nightingales, concealed amidst the green thickets. Beautifully sparkling in the morning sun rays, the waters of this bitter sea had a fresh, inviting look of coolness that was irresistible. We were very soon enjoying the novel sensation of bathing in a sea in which it is utterly impossible to sink. To the taste, the waters have that horribly acrid, burning flavour which every traveller has described, but its strand is white and pebbly, and has not the sulphurous, deadly, and desolate look which I expected.

The sea is forty-six miles long and ten miles wide, and has no outlet for its waters, which are reduced in volume solely by

evaporation. The Jordan, the Arnon, and other streams of considerable size, empty themselves into its bitter waters, besides the innumerable watercourses from Moab, the Arabah and the hill country of Judæa. Yet all this influx of water has no perceptible effect upon the appearance of the sea. Towards its southern end the wicked cities of the plain were once supposed to have stood, but various theories on this point have found favour with different travellers. We were, however, obliged to content ourselves with a short stay on the shores of this strange sea, as the sun was now excessively hot, and we were anxious to get back in good time to Jerusalem.

Our course now lay across the dry and desolate plain, stretching from the margin of the lake up to the white limestone hills of Judæa. There were a good many varieties of shrubs, one of them, the sea-pink, with its pale red flower, being very abundant. The sun now beat down upon our devoted heads with a force which was overpowering, and we were very glad to gain the lower slopes of the mountains in front, where more air was stirring. As we toiled up the steep path, we frequently stopped to survey the noble prospect presented by that broad valley, with the green thread running along its centre, denoting the course of the sacred river. There is nothing of interest in the bare white hillsides up which we now were toiling, for scarcely a shrub or tuft of grass is to be seen. Towards mid-day we reached a building of some size, in tolerably good condition but seemingly deserted, though one or two Arabs, after a while,

appeared. We entered a gateway and found a paved court-yard beyond, with a structure somewhat like a mosque in the centre. As we had plenty of shade here, we spread our lunch upon the pavement, passing an hour very pleasantly, although our dragoman was not quite certain that we were not intruding on forbidden ground. This shrine or sanctuary is called Neby Mûsa, the grave of Moses, who, according to Moslem tradition, is buried here. From this point our way lay over a waste of rocky ridges and bare hill-sides, until we came down upon the green slopes of cultivated ground in the vicinity of Bethany. This village looked very peaceful and beautiful in the quiet evening light, and we would fain have lingered awhile to muse over the sacred associations of the spot.

CHAPTER XII.

JERUSALEM TO DAMASCUS.

HAVING finished our preparations, we bade farewell to Jerusalem on Wednesday morning, April 3, after a very brief sojourn, which was barely sufficient to enable us to see a few of the more prominent spots mentioned in sacred history. We were also joined by Mr. Sim, whose excellent company I had previously enjoyed in Egypt, and our dragoman provided us with an additional tent in consequence. I paid a visit once more to the church of the Sepulchre before leaving, and saw it to more advantage, as there happened to be very few pilgrims about. We left the city by the Damascus gate, and followed the miserable stony track which leads over the hill Scopus through a most bleak, uninteresting landscape. The misty mountains of Gilead were seen in the far distance, and turning to the west the most conspicuous peak was Neby Samwil, the ancient Mizpeh. From this point we passed close to the sites of numerous places mentioned in Scripture. One of the first of these is Nob, where David received the shewbread from Ahimelech the priest, who was afterwards slain by Doeg the Edomite. On a small eminence not far

from this are the supposed ruins of Gibeah of Saul, the birthplace of Israel's first king. Farther to the north, some ancient fragments of stones, built into the modern hovels of a village, are supposed to be remains of Ramah.

The next place of note we passed is Bethel, situated about half a mile on our right, on a bare hill-side. This is one of the places most frequently mentioned as the scene of many stirring events, and it is one of the oldest cities in Canaan. Here Jacob's vision took place, to commemorate which he set up his pillar, and Samuel judged Israel in this place. Jeroboam also set up his worship of the golden calf at this sacred spot, though righteous priests were, after the Babylonish captivity, found in Bethel to teach the worship of Jehovah. The ruins of a Greek church and a huge cistern are the chief remains of antiquity to be seen in Bethel, otherwise it is a miserable village of mud hovels. We were now passing through the hill country of Benjamin, a barren, rocky territory, but presently entered upon the more fertile inheritance of Joseph, known as Ephraim, or Samaria. Now the slopes of the hills began to wear a rich and cultivated look, and plantations of olives and fig trees, enclosed in spaces like orchards, gave softness to the landscape. Presently we found ourselves in a winding valley, clothed with grassy banks and green cornfields, and soon after this came in sight of Ain Yebrûd, a most picturesquely-situated village, on the brow of a wooded height.

From this point we now descended a steep ravine, by a very rugged and rocky path, having hills on both sides,

terraced and cultivated with olives, vines, and fig trees. At the foot of this ravine we found ourselves in a sequestered wooded glade, with fine old trees on all sides and rich green turf under foot. In a narrow valley a little beyond this is the 'Robber's Fountain,' a large massively-constructed reservoir or tank, much dilapidated in some parts. This place has a particularly bad reputation, and our dragoman hurried us past it, especially as it was growing late, and our camp was still a long way off. In fact, it was quite dark when we reached the tents, which were pitched high up on a bleak hill-side, near the village of Sinjil. This village has several curious old square towers, apparently remains of some important building, round which the wretched hovels of the inhabitants have been erected. From this we descended on the following morning to the very rich plain, near which one of the most interesting Bible sites is to be seen—that of Shiloh.

To Dr. Robinson belongs the merit of discovering the true situation of Shiloh, which had formerly been placed at Neby Samwil. Here Joshua set up the Tabernacle before the congregation of Israel, and here it remained for 300 years, till the sons of Eli carried it to battle against the Philistines, when it was captured. Their old father fell back dead here when the news was brought him of the Ark of God being taken and his two sons slain. It fell into obscurity after the death of Eli, and now presents an utterly deserted look of desolation. Some grassy knolls, strewn with old stones, mark the site of Shiloh, and high hills surround it on all sides,

except where the valley opens to the south. There are two distinct ruins of ancient buildings remaining, one of them shadowed by a noble old terebinth tree, the sole one to be seen. One of these buildings is of small extent, square, with massive walls of stones, and on its north side had seemingly been strengthened by heavy buttresses of a later date than the walls. Over the doorway is a large stone, with two altars sculptured on it in relief, one at each end; next there are some wreaths of flowers, and in the middle a vase of classical form. Tristram supposes that this may have been a mediæval fortress church. The other building is a few hundred yards distant, and is simply a square tower externally, with massive old walls. A low door admits to a curious chamber inside, which appears at one time to have been used as a chapel. Two columns support the roof, which has a Gothic character, but the capitals of the pillars are Ionic, and seem too small for the shafts.

From this point we rode along the cornfields in the hollow of the valley until we rejoined the main road to Nablous. For a while it winds through a green plain surrounded with dark hills, and we observed several small hamlets on the hill-sides, with the ruins of one or two *khans*, or castles. The valley, whose narrow course we now followed, has a cultivated, fertile look, and we stopped for lunch in the midst of very rich cornfields, near the village of Hawara. Near this we had crossed over a rocky ridge in the hills, from the summit of which we gained a most extensive view. The plain is seen extending for some miles in front, one rich

billowy green expanse, with clumps of fine old olive trees scattered over its surface. A range of low hills bound the plain on the right, on the left is the rugged form of Mount Gerizim where stood the sanctuary of the Samaritans, with Mount Ebal beyond, and far away to the distant north is seen the dome-like, snow-clad summit of Hermon. This is the fertile plain of Shechem, and there is a richness and soft beauty about it which is in striking contrast with the sterility and barrenness of Judæa.

We determined to ascend to the summit of Mount Gerizim before entering Nablous, so hired a guide from Hawara, who took us by a pathway, leading from the main road, a short distance from the village. Travellers almost invariably ascend the mountain from Nablous, but ours was a more expeditious way, and an easy enough ascent. After a pretty steep climb, we stood on the highest point, close to the extensive ruins of the Samaritan temple. The view is unquestionably very fine. A confused mass of dark mountains, stretching all along the eastern side of the Jordan valley until they join on to the peaks around Hermon, whose snowy summit towers above all, bounds one side of the picture. On the other side the blue Mediterranean is seen, with a broad belt of sand intervening between the green plain of Sharon and the sea. Round about us are the mountains of Ephraim, and the fertile plain of Shechem at the base of Gerizim. On the opposite side of the valley in which Nablous is situated, the rugged, barren form of Mount Ebal, the 'Mount of Cursings,' arises.

The ruins of the Samaritan temple occupy an extensive

portion of ground, and took us some time to examine. A large rectangular enclosure first claims attention, 255 feet by 240 feet, surrounded by walls nearly 6 feet thick and 12 feet high in some parts. The remains of square towers are to be seen at the corners, upon one of which a white Mohammedan mosque has been erected. The ruins of an octagonal building, said by Captain Wilson, who explored the ruins some years ago, to be the church of the Virgin, are seen near the centre of the large enclosure. This building probably is a part of the fortress erected on Mount Gerizim by the Emperor Justinian to protect the Christian church from the attacks of the Samaritans, and there are traces of a solid platform of massive stones below, which may once have supported the Samaritan temple. There is another large enclosure near this, divided into three compartments, with massive walls and flanking towers, seemingly of Roman construction. The line of great slabs, which the Samaritans hold to be the twelve stones of the tribes brought up by Joshua from the Jordan, are seen at the base of the wall of the larger enclosure. This, however, is extremely doubtful, and in all probability these massive stones were the foundation of the Roman fortress. To the south is the Samaritan 'Holy of Holies,' a long sloping bare rock, with a deep pit at its end. To this all devout Samaritans turn in prayer, and they take off their shoes as they approach this spot. Here, according to their tradition, Abraham was about to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice; here he met Melchisedec; Jacob had his heavenly vision on this place; and on it the Ark was set up.

We visited the scene of the Samaritan feast of the Passover, to the east of the ruins, a mere trench built of rough stones, with a circular pit in which the lambs are roasted. The whole community, now 134 in number, assemble and encamp near this spot. Towards sunset, a few men in white surplices recite a form of prayer near the pit, after which they proceed to make the fire ready for roasting the lambs. After a while they are joined by all the full-grown men, who also take part in the prostrations and prayers which continue till near sunset. At the moment of sunset, the priest repeats rapidly the words of the 12th chapter of Exodus, in which the assembly of Israel are directed to kill the passover. The lambs are killed while the priest is speaking, and after being carefully skinned and cleaned, their bodies are placed in the oven formed in the pit, and kept till thoroughly roasted. When all is ready, the covering of the pit is opened up, and the bodies of the sheep drawn out one by one, and placed on brown mats previously prepared for their reception. They are taken to the trench and laid out in line between the two files of the Samaritans, who now have shoes on their feet and staves in their hands, as directed in the sacred ordinance. After a further short recitation of prayers, they suddenly all seat themselves on the ground, and commence to eat silently and rapidly, until the whole is consumed.

The origin of the Samaritans is narrated in the Second Book of Kings. The colonists, who had been placed by the Assyrians in the cities of Canaan when Israel was carried away into captivity, attributed the pest of wild animals with

which they were infested to their ignorance of the worship of the gods of the land. They petitioned for Jewish priests to instruct them, and some strangers did come who professed to teach the Mosaic law, but in after times the true Jews of Jerusalem utterly refused to hold any communion with these impious dwellers in Samaria, who had embraced a mutilated creed. The Samaritans therefore resolved to erect a sanctuary of their own upon Mount Gerizim, and this was done under the supervision of their high priest Manasseh, who had married a daughter of Sanballat, to the great displeasure of Nehemiah. He brought with him a copy of the law of Moses, no doubt the original of the copy of the Pentateuch which the Samaritans boast is of such immense antiquity. This was about the year 420 B.C., and from this date may be considered the rise of Shechem as the capital of the Samaritan sect. The Jews always had a bitter hatred to the Samaritans, and they attacked their temple with an army under John Hyrcanus, and completely destroyed it.

During the reign of Vespasian, Shechem was rebuilt and called 'Neapolis,' which has been gradually changed into Nablous. The city surrendered to the Moslem invaders of Syria, and suffered considerably during the wars between them and the Crusaders. Its Samaritan inhabitants dwell here, scarcely attracting the most cursory notice from travellers or historians, and their literature is of the scantiest description. The copy of the Pentateuch, a collection of hymns, a manuscript professing to be the Book of Joshua, a few commentaries on the Law, and a history of their

nation from the Exodus to Mahomet, are all they possess, according to Porter. He gives a minute description of the celebrated copy of the Pentateuch, which is a roll 15 inches wide, and from 20 to 30 yards long, made of coarse parchment, very old and stained in appearance. It is rolled upon two rods, and the writing is in transverse columns, each column 13 inches long by 7 wide, and containing 70 lines. There are 110 columns in all; the characters are of the old Samaritan type, and many parts bear traces of correction or change. Porter judges from the vellum and character of the writing that the sixth or seventh century of the Christian era is about the date it was written. The Samaritans declare it was written by Abishua, the son of Phinehas, 3,500 years ago. They hold their venerable Pentateuch to be the divine standard of faith and morality. They believe in one God and in one law-giver and prophet, Moses; also in the advent of a Messiah, who is, however, to be merely a human being. The resurrection of the body and a belief in future rewards and punishment is held by them, and they observe all the great feasts enjoined in the Pentateuch. Their Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday, and on Saturday they have three services of worship in the synagogue.

We now descended to the city, after inspecting the extensive ruins on the summit of Mount Gerizim, but before entering it, turned aside to see one of the most deeply interesting spots in Palestine. This is Jacob's Well, at the entrance of the valley of Shechem, and where Our Lord held that remarkable discourse with the woman of Samaria which

is narrated in the 4th chapter of St. John's Gospel. There are several ruined buildings about the well, which is covered over with a vaulted chamber, in the floor of which the mouth of the well is seen. This is undoubtedly the spot where Our Saviour sat and talked with the woman on His journey from Judæa, for here was the 'deep' well at the base of Gerizim, to which the woman evidently referred when she said, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.' This, then, is the parcel of ground that Jacob bought of Hamor, the father of Shechem, where he erected his altar and sank a well. The vaulted chamber is part of a Christian church, built in the fourth century over this sacred spot, and which subsequently became a ruin. There is an air of complete solitude and seclusion from the haunts of men about the scene that gives it an especial charm, for here you can calmly meditate upon the gracious words Our Lord spoke to that sinful woman.

The yellow rays of the declining sun lit up the grey mouldering walls of this ancient city as we slowly rode into it through an old gateway. There appeared to be some festival, or *fantasia* as it is called, going on, for a great number of the inhabitants were amusing themselves under the shade of some old olive-trees at the foot of Gerizim. The women and children were mostly clad in white garments, and there were various games and amusements for the children, whose cries of delight and merriment were heard from afar. The town itself struck us as being very ancient, with its arched doorways and smooth stone fronts to the houses, some of them with fragments of columns and capitals

built into the walls. The bazaars were crowded gloomy alleys full of a busy, fierce-looking population, who hardly took the trouble to glance up at us as we passed along. They have a bad character for turbulence and lawlessness, and are particularly hostile to strangers. Our camp was pitched on a plateau of land, on the Samaria side of the city, near a running stream, surrounded with fine old trees. The present city stands on the right side of Neapolis and of the original city of Sychar, just above the watershed of the valley. The stream near which our tents were pitched descends from Mount Gerizim, and after passing through the city, flows in a westerly course along the fertile valley towards Samaria. This valley is filled with a succession of beautiful gardens, in which may be seen the olive, the fig, the bright green walnut, the pomegranate with its rich crimson flower, the thorn, terebinth and sycamore trees, whose combined verdure give to Nablous its peculiar charm of situation.

Accompanied by a guide, we set off to visit the Samaritan synagogue, a modern building with rough whitewashed walls, their ancient one having long ago been taken by the Moslems. It is approached through dirty tortuous streets, and the building itself has very dark narrow entrances and passages. The interior of the synagogue is mean-looking, but you are not permitted to enter. The rabbi brought out, and placed on a chair near the door for us to look at, the ancient copy of the Pentateuch, which is an old-looking roll of vellum, with a richly-inlaid metal case, the whole enveloped in a

thick silk covering, also finely embossed and decorated. We were only allowed a very hurried glance at the sacred roll, and were then taken by our portly and consequential Samaritan guide to the roof of his house, from which a good view of the town is obtained.

After dinner that day we were favoured with a visit from the Rev. Mr. El Karey, of the Palestine Christian Union Mission, an agreeable, chatty young Syrian, who has been here for seven or eight years. He seems to have rather uphill work of it at Nablous, and has but a poor opinion of the Samaritans. His work is amongst the Moslem population, and he has about thirty resident converts, though sometimes nearly a hundred persons assemble when he preaches. He says that the Samaritans are annually diminishing in number, and that there is great fighting amongst the young men for brides, owing to the limited numbers available. We were rather disenchanted by his assuring us that the copy of the Pentateuch we saw was not the veritable old one, which they dare not show to strangers unless a large sum of money was paid. In the original, it seems, they have altered the name of the mountain of worship, substituting Gerizim in its place. Our reverend guest enjoyed a glass of claret and a cigar, and sent us a large melon as a present after his departure.

Next morning we were off by seven o'clock, and followed the valley for some distance, after which we struck up the hill-side and came down upon a beautifully-wooded glen, at the foot of the heights on which Samaria stands. Passed several old villages on both sides of our track, all of them

characterised by those curious square buildings, and by nine o'clock we mounted the steep ascent to the ancient and celebrated city of Samaria. It is placed on a commanding situation, with a lofty range of hills behind, and the small plain of Samaria at its foot, which opens out again on to the great plain of Sharon. Two other ranges of hills encircle the plain of Samaria, so that the city is almost surrounded by mountains. The ground slopes away on all sides from the city, and valley, plain, and mountain-side are alike covered with cultivated fields and olive-groves.

The city was first built by Omri, who bought the site from Shemer, after whom he named the place. His wicked son Ahab afterwards erected there a splendid temple to Baal, and during his reign it was besieged by the Syrians, when Benhadad, King of Damascus, with his immense army, were defeated by a small number of Israelites. Elijah and Elisha both lived here and worked many miracles, and at the pool of Samaria the dogs licked the blood of Ahab, as the prophet had foretold. Here Elisha received the visit of Naaman, and here he led the Syrian troops, stricken with blindness, into the heart of the city. In the year 720 B.C. Samaria was taken by the Assyrians, when the Samaritans removed to the more ancient city of Sychar. The city was afterwards taken by Alexander, by John Hyrcanus, and by Pompey, and was finally given to Herod the Great by Augustus. Herod recolonised the city and adorned it with splendid palaces, theatres and temples, and changed its name to Sebaste, by the Arabic form of which, Sebustiyeh, it is now

known. It became the seat of a Christian bishopric in the time of the Crusaders, as is seen by the remains of the church which they founded.

On ascending from the wooded glade, the first object which is seen is the ruin of the church of St. John the Baptist, standing on the brow of the eastern face of the hill. The tomb of the Baptist is shown, and here, it is alleged, he was beheaded. The style of the architecture of the church indicates that it was built during the Crusades, and two faces of the exterior walls are in good preservation. The massive stones are smoothly hewn, and the altar niche is richly ornamented. The church is now roofless, and part of it has been converted into a mosque. The hill rises in terraces above the plain, but it is now entirely under the plough, so that the stones and columns of Herod's magnificent temple have been mostly removed. Still a few of these do remain, and as we wound our way through the village, followed by tribes of children clamouring for *backsheesh*, we saw many evidences of buried ruins in the olive-gardens and cornfields which now occupy the site of the city. Portions of columns, sometimes half-imbedded in the earth, occasionally a single shaft without the capital standing upright under a venerable tree, then perhaps four or five columns in a row, with a few yards between each, or others built into a dyke round one of the gardens, attest the former grandeur of Samaria.

We ascended to the highest point of the hill, and had a most extensive and beautiful view over the richly-cultivated slopes,

dotted with groups of olive trees, the great green plain of Sharon, and the blue sea beyond. The eye ranges over a number of Scriptural sites of the deepest interest. Looking towards the sea Dothan is seen, where Joseph was sent to seek his brethren, and where he was thrown into a pit by them; to the north Mount Carmel, the scene of Elijah's grand achievements, is visible; farther to the north-east is the snowy dome of Hermon, and in the foreground the fertile valleys around Samaria, the theatre of heroic victories by the mighty men of Israel.

From this we once more descended to the valley, and held on our way past many ruined villages and towns which crowned the slopes of the lower hills. A succession of windings through the hills brought us to the long flat plain, which once was a lake, and now is covered with rich crops, called the 'Drowning Meadow.' As it has no outlet, the waters from the surrounding hills gather in the rainy season into a lake, which partially covers the great basin. On an eminence at the west side of the meadow stands the remains of an ancient fortress, still in good preservation, called Sanûr, once belonging to a powerful sheikh, who exercised feudal rule over the surrounding district until, in 1830, he was driven out by Abdullah Pasha. The family, however, still survives, for some of them are again in their old haunts, and the fortress has been repaired to a certain extent.

This flat plain or meadow is several miles long, and is terminated at its northern extremity by a rocky ridge, over which we crossed, getting a fine view of the great plain of

Esdraelon. From this point our route lay through narrow circling valleys, filled with rich herbage and endless beautiful varieties of wild flowers. In these valleys the heroic Gideon commenced his glorious career, and led his army through them against the Midianites, who were encamped at Jezreel. They are characterised by a peaceful and still air of pastoral life, not a village is to be seen, and only a stray flock of sheep cropping the scented herbage which so thickly carpets the ground. Our camping-place was Jenin, the ancient Engannim, a town of some 3,000 inhabitants, who have by no means a good reputation. It is situated on a rising ground projecting into the plain, and its white summits and dome-roofed houses are seen in striking contrast with the dark foliage of olive and orange trees, mingled with a few palms, which surround the town.

It was a beautiful evening as we pitched our tents, and the setting sun streamed across the broad plain of Esdraelon with fine effect. From a knoll near the tents we had an excellent view of the plain, with the mountains of Gilboa on the right, beyond which is the detached form of the Little Hermon, and the conical outline of Mount Tabor still farther back. It was thought desirable, owing to the very indifferent character of the inhabitants of Jenin, that we should have a guard, who accordingly ensconced themselves outside our tents. There was a large French party of ten or twelve gentlemen, with two or three priests among them, encamped near our tents. We made an early start the following morning to get well across the plain before the sun grew

oppressively hot, and we very soon were cantering over its great rich level surface.

The plain of Esdraelon is one of the most celebrated scenes in the Holy Land, and has from remote ages been the battlefield where many mighty hosts have contended. The plain is triangular in shape, and its extreme length is about 25 miles, while from Jenin to the mountains near Nazareth it is perhaps 16 miles broad. To the eye it presents a great green level expanse, undulating in some parts, and marked with grassy hillocks and occasional deserted villages in its more cultivated parts. But very little of this rich plain is cultivated; the greater part is one gently undulating surface of fine pasture—the chosen grazing-ground of the wild Arab, who has little scruple in appropriating the grain which the peasants from the hill country near at hand have vainly tried to gather in. No fences or boundaries are to be seen, and the aspect of the country is deserted and neglected, the tall thistles and brilliantly-coloured wild flowers of Palestine flourishing in uncontrolled luxuriance. In spring the plain is a billowy mass of waving verdure, with hardly a single tree to form a feature in the landscape. This fertile expanse of territory was the heritage of Issachar, once one of the chief tribes of Israel, though afterwards it sunk into dependence upon Zebulun which possessed part of Galilee.

Esdraelon was the great battlefield of the Jewish nation after they gained possession of Palestine. Here Sisera, with his 900 chariots of iron, was overthrown by Barak, while the prophetess Deborah gave the signal of battle from Mount

Tabor. That 'ancient river, the river Kishon,' swept away the Canaanites before the victorious hosts of Israel. Here Gideon, with his gallant 300, 'faint, yet pursuing,' overthrew the Midianites near Mount Gilboa, when the discomfited host fled away to the Jordan. Another great battle—this time the result was disastrous to Israel—took place on the slopes of Gilboa, when Saul and Jonathan were utterly overthrown by the Philistines. Yet again was the invader victorious when the king of Egypt, in the days of Josiah, encountered in the 'plain of Megiddo' the chosen warriors of Judah; and their monarch, sore wounded by an archer, was carried to Jerusalem to die.

The mind dwelt upon these stirring associations as we rode along that rich plain beside great patches of wheat, bearded like barley and well-formed in the ear, while each step we took now was in the footsteps of mighty warriors of old. In about two hours' time we reached Zer'in, the ancient Jezreel, now but a poor village, on the top of a rising knoll, with a square tower at its highest point. From the wretched flat-roofed hovels forming the village, a fine view is got of Mount Carmel, Gilboa, where fell the unhappy king of Israel, the hills of Samaria to the south, and those round Galilee to the north. This spot was once the capital of Israel, though no trace of its former splendour remains save a few half-buried marble sarcophagi. Here dwelt Ahab the wicked king, and from the towers of the palace the watchman, looking towards the Jordan across the coveted vineyard of Naboth, saw the chariot of Jehu who was advancing

furiously to destroy the infamous Jezebel. We did not linger long in this spot, but descended to the plain again, riding through great quantities of a beautiful purple flower which covered the grassy slope.

Striking across the arm of the plain where the Philistines drove the Israelites to the slopes of Gilboa, which is seen on the right crowned with a village on its highest crest peopled by dervishes, we soon reached the village of Sôlem, the ancient Shunem. The touching story of Elisha and the woman of Shunem at once will occur to the reader, and in those very fields was her beloved son at work when he was struck to the ground. It is a collection of poor mud hovels, surrounded with thick hedges of prickly pear. From it we passed along the base of the Little Hermon, and presently came in sight of Mount Ṭabor, a beautiful mountain, shaped like a bent bow, its sides richly clothed with verdure and trees. Half-way between Tabor and Shunem we came to the site of the village of Nain, where Our Lord restored to life the widow's son, and here we rested for an hour. It stands on the bare slope of the hill, and there are traces of buildings which show that it must once have been a walled town of some size. There is an old tomb outside the village, with a large tree near it, which affords a grateful shade to travellers, who usually stop here for some refreshment. Here we fell in with an American party, with whom was a dragoman from Alexandria, who had been strongly recommended to me before leaving England. This gentleman seemed to have an exalted idea of his

own capabilities, and had all the swagger and boasting talk of your genuine oriental dragoman.

As we intended to ascend to the top of Mount Tabor before encamping at Nazareth, we did not delay long, but soon found ourselves at the foot of this deeply interesting mountain. Leaving our horses at its base, we slowly toiled up its steep sides by a well-defined track, occupying nearly an hour in the ascent. The sides of Tabor are covered with green trees—the fig, walnut, evergreen oak, arbutus, and many others, which give it a peculiarly rich, verdant appearance. The summit of the mountain is a long sloping plateau, covered with trees and quantities of ancient ruins. At the east end of the summit stands a newly-constructed Greek church and convent, with nothing of interest inside. The ruins are highly picturesque, and are part of fortifications and a monastery erected here by the Crusaders, though some Roman and Jewish remains also are to be seen. Tabor is 1,400 feet above the plain, and the view from it is certainly one of the most deeply interesting in all Palestine. On the north side the adjacent mountains meet the lower slopes of Tabor, a succession of undulating grassy glades, thickly clothed with trees like the park scenery of England, and the great dome of Hermon is in the distance. On the extreme eastern horizon we see the long dim range of mountains beyond Gilead and Bashan, with the table-land intervening between them and the heights above the Sea of Galilee, of whose waters we got a glimpse. From Galilee we can trace the Jordan valley almost to the Dead Sea; and on the south

we have Gilboa, Little Hermon, and the hills of Samaria. All round the base of Tabor to the south and west is the plain of Esdraelon, while towards the Mediterranean are seen Mount Carmel and the low hills near Nazareth. What innumerable spots, celebrated in sacred history, do we now survey! what mighty names recur to memory!—Gideon, Saul, David, and other men of valour, the dauntless Elijah, 'the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof,' Elisha and the prophets, until the majestic array culminates in the blessed Redeemer Himself, whose early dwelling-place is so near at hand!

Reluctantly leaving the spot from whence the grand panorama above described is seen, we descended the mountain and rode slowly towards Nazareth. Our path lay along the side of grassy, rolling hills dotted with trees, on which the sun's declining rays lingered, lighting up the calm landscape with their mellow lustre. As we approached the home where Our Saviour dwelt, all the landscape felt so silent and peaceful, that I seemed to experience more of those solemn emotions which such a scene must suggest, than in the frequented spots where monkish superstition has seized hold of every available traditional site on which to erect a costly shrine. Our tents were pitched near the Greek church outside the town, and not far from the public well where the inhabitants mostly assemble.

The following day being Sunday, we did not attempt to move away from Nazareth, but rested quietly. We attended service in the handsome new Gothic church which has been

erected for the Rev. John Zeller, who has for nearly fifteen years ministered to the spiritual wants of the Protestant population. The contributions to build this really elegant church chiefly came from England, though Germany also gave good help. There was a most attentive congregation of native Christians, about 100 in number, most of whom were men, though a few women occupied one of the galleries. The service was in Arabic, conducted by a deacon belonging to the place, who also preached a good long sermon. The singing, accompanied by the organ, was very fair, and the utmost decorum prevailed throughout the service. Inside the church looks very neat, the benches, painting, and decorations all being the work of native artists. We had the pleasure of making both Mr. and Mrs. Zeller's acquaintance, and spent part of the evening with them at their house.

Nazareth is situated on the steep side of the circling limestone hills which bound the plain of Esdraelon, and it is surrounded by ridges, on whose slopes are green cornfields, gardens, and olive-groves. The hill on which it is built is very steep, as may be seen from the precipitous rocks forming the sides of some of the streets, and the houses are almost all of white stone. At the back of the town is a hill, about 400 feet above the plain, from whose summit an extensive view is gained, and travellers have tried to identify this with the 'Mount of Precipitation.' There are no buildings in Nazareth of special interest, the principal one being the Latin convent which stands on a slope of the hill at the outskirts of the town. The interior is square, divided into

nave and aisles, and a broad flight of stairs leads down to the sanctuary, cased with marble and hung with silver lamps, in which the Annunciation of the birth of Our Lord was made to the Virgin Mary. From this grotto, as it really is, you ascend by steps to a cave said to be the Virgin's kitchen, of which the fireplace still remains. A few minutes' walk from this is the 'Fountain of the Virgin,' where the Greeks have placed their 'Church of the Annunciation,' as they allege that the angel appeared to her when she was drawing water. This is a favourite spot for the women of the place assembling to draw water, accompanied by their little ones. The maidens of Nazareth are famed for their beauty and the peculiarity of their costume, which is a close-fitting jacket and long white veil, with a curious roll of silver coins round the face. It is supposed that Nazareth has a population of 5,000, of whom 700 are Protestants; and it is the chief commercial centre of Galilee. Tristram says that 'the trade of the place arises chiefly from its being the mart of exchange between the exporting merchants of Acre and Caiffa for Europe, and the wild Bedawin sheep-masters and sheikhs, who can ride here from the Jordan and transact their business without giving the Turkish officials time to intercept or molest them.'

Accompanied by Mr. Zeller, we ascended to the hill above the town, passing through the dirty narrow streets and emerging upon a beautiful grassy slope decked with numerous pretty wild flowers, and many oak, fig, and pomegranate trees. Very peaceful and lovely the surrounding landscape looked in the soft evening light, all hallowed as it was by

the memory of Him who passed so many years of His life on earth in this secluded spot. At the top of the hill is a ruinous Moslem tomb, and from this there is a most commanding view, a good deal similar to that from the summit of Mount Tabor. There are the peaks of Hermon, Tabor, and Gilboa, with the ancient towns at its base, the great plain where so many battles decisive of the fate of Israel were fought, but in addition there is the entire range of Mount Carmel, with a long line of white sea-coast, and the wooded glades and green vales at the back of Nazareth. We had the pleasure of Mr. Zeller's company at dinner, and he gave us some interesting information about his Christian mission work. Most of his congregation are proselytes from the Greek and Latin Churches, with sometimes an occasional Jewish convert. No Mohammedan, it seems, could become a Christian without forfeiting his life in the long run; Mr. Zeller has sometimes enquirers amongst them, but rarely an open conversion. He has great difficulty in inducing women to go to church, but they willingly come to his house and talk to him and Mrs. Zeller upon religious subjects; this they do regularly every week.

This whole district is miserably misgoverned by the Turks, as the Pashas do just as they like in the way of levying new taxes, seizing men for soldiers, and other arbitrary acts. We heard one specimen of the way these Turkish officials do things. The Pasha of Damascus, to pay off a loan for certain purposes which he had contracted from a Jew, sold to the latter one-half of the plain of Esdraelon for the sum of

10,000*l.*, the annual revenue which it yielded being no less than 5,000*l.* The Sultan, however, it seems, refused to ratify the bargain. Nominally, the people of the district are consulted as to taxes being imposed, for the Pasha goes through the form of assembling them together, and requesting them to affix their names and seals to the decree, and this they dare not refuse to do. If there is an election of head man for a district, and the person chosen is displeasing to the Pasha, he quietly alters the numbers so as to put in his own nominee. Taxes are levied even upon the Bedawin through the sheikhs, who are charged a certain rate for the number of horsemen of each tribe, although they take good care to recoup themselves. But the same stories of misgovernment and tyranny are current everywhere throughout the wide Turkish dominions.

We left Nazareth by six o'clock the following morning, and reached Kefr Kenna, the supposed Cana of Galilee, in little more than two hours. It is a small village, mostly inhabited by Christians, situated on the side of a valley full of fig, olive, and other trees. There is a half-ruined church, in which are shown one or two of the waterpots of stone said to have been used by Our Lord when He made the water into wine. The waterpot is much more like a drinking-trough fixed into the wall, with a hole in it for the water to escape by; but it is evidently very old. Our road from this now led through a succession of shallow, well-cultivated valleys, which lead to the rich, rolling, grassy plains above the Lake of Tiberias. There are a good many signs of prosperity here,

for you see the peasants at work ploughing the fields with a rude implement drawn by oxen; others watching their flocks, and an occasional garden or orchard of olives is passed. Not far from this we passed the curious bare hill called the 'Horns of Hattin,' near which the Crusaders sustained a disastrous defeat by Saladin in 1187, and this led to the entire reconquest of the Holy Land by the Moslems.

At last we caught sight of the still Lake of Galilee, embosomed amid grassy mountains, and gazed upon the favourite scene of Our Saviour's blessed labours of love. Very calm it looked, with the reflections of the mountains sleeping in its deep waters, across which no sail was to be seen wooing the passing breeze; all seemed dead and deserted. Except the town of Tiberias, hardly a human habitation is to be met with around its once thickly populated shores. The great cities in which Jesus preached, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and others, have all passed into oblivion, hardly one stone left upon another to point out to the passing traveller where so many proud buildings once lifted up their heads aloft. Those hill-sides formerly teemed with a large population, and now afford pasturage but for a few flocks of sheep and goats. On those silent shores great crowds were wont to gather together and listen to the gracious words of the Man of Sorrows. Here, at any rate, we may gaze with satisfaction upon the chief scene of Our Lord's ministration, without being offended by all the monkish paraphernalia so obtrusive in most of the sacred localities of Palestine.

The Lake of Tiberias is nearly 13 miles long by 7 miles

wide, and is 655 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. It is exceedingly deep and swarms with fish, which are little troubled by the dwellers in Tiberias. Formerly there was a great fisher population, who plied their vocation in hundreds of boats, but now only an occasional fisherman may be seen throwing his cast-net from the shore into the placid lake. In some places the mountains rise up precipitously from the margin of the lake, almost to a height of 2,000 feet. The hollow in which it lies is bounded by the hills of Galilee on the west and those of Bashan on the east. On the western side the hills approach close to the lake, and their grassy slopes are decked with an infinite variety of lovely wild flowers. The town of Tiberias is placed at a bend in the shore, on a small plateau of land, and it was founded by Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist in prison, about the year A.D. 16. It is rectangular in form and surrounded with a wall and towers; but these are in a very ruinous condition. Some remains of the ancient city are to be seen in the large hewn stones and fragments of columns strewn along the margin of the lake, besides many marble columns, ancient walls, Roman pavements, and traces of villas, which are met with a little way from the town.

Tiberias became the seat of the Jewish Sanhedrim in the middle of the second century, and has always been regarded by the Jews as one of the four holy cities of Palestine—Jerusalem, Safed, and Hebron sharing this honour with it. For three centuries it continued to be the metropolis of the Jews and their chief dwelling-place, but it was captured

successively by the Persians, by the Arabs, and by the Crusaders under Tancred. Many of the famous rabbis are buried in the hill-side at the back of the town, among them Rabbi Zacharias, the author of the Jerusalem Talmud. At present the population is almost entirely Mohammedan and Jewish; of the latter people there may be about 800 souls, with a few Protestant families. In 1837 there was a terrible earthquake, which greatly injured the town and fortifications, making wide rents in the latter that have never been repaired. Two miles south of the town are the hot baths, which have a temperature of 144° Fahr., and are supposed to be efficacious for curing rheumatism and debility. The water wells up from the ground in four springs, and has a bitter, salt taste, with a strong sulphurous smell.

We arrived at the town about mid-day, and took up our quarters in the vacant space within the fortifications, where travellers usually encamp. The lake was about 100 yards below us, and we commanded a fine view of its unruffled surface shimmering under the hot sunshine. Being too hot for much active exertion, I enjoyed the luxury of a bathe, which was most refreshing. After this I strolled about the ruined walls and towers, and then tried to make my way through the tortuous lanes of the town, but got involved in a labyrinth of narrow streets. I got into the Jewish quarter and passed by some houses with the windows wide open, so that I could see what was going on inside. In all of them the women appeared to be engaged in sewing dresses or knitting fancy work of some kind, but they seemed to be angry

at my inspecting their operations and motioned me away. They were generally young and good-looking and dressed in the picturesque costume, now getting out of fashion seemingly, the full zouave-like trousers and long blue or white veil reaching almost to their heels. I thought it better not to pursue my investigations much farther, as I might have difficulty in finding my way out of the intricacies of this ancient city. It continued very hot all the afternoon and evening until towards nine o'clock, when it commenced to blow excessively hard.

The following morning looked very doubtful at first, but the weather soon cleared up, and we had a bright breezy day to pursue our journey along the shores of the lake. For more than three miles the hills rise up precipitously from the water's edge, their grassy slopes decked with many brilliantly-tinted wild flowers, especially the splendid scarlet anemone, the purple convolvolus, gaudy tulips, the yellow ranunculus, and a finely-coloured purple flower like a hollyhock. Fringing the yellow strand are quantities of oleanders, their pink blossoms in full beauty, and at each promontory we got charming views of the ever-winding shores of the lake. We presently came to the miserable little village called Mejdel, the ancient Magdala, the home of Mary whose touching devotion to Our Lord called forth His special commendation. The strand near this village consists of a fine white gravel, filled with immense numbers of most minute and beautiful little shells, of which we picked up a quantity. From the ridge above Magdala there is a fine view of the rich plain of

Gennesareth, carpeted with wild flowers and watered by several small streams, beyond which the Galilean mountains rise upwards in successive ranges to a height of almost 4,000 feet above the lake. Amidst these hills the holy city of Safed, the supposed 'city set on an hill,' occupies a commanding site. Turning to the winding shore of Galilee, the probable sites of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin succeed one another, though, in fulfilment of Our Saviour's prediction, nothing remains of them now save a few shapeless mounds.

After passing Magdala, we came to an old ruinous water-mill, still apparently worked by the Arabs, some of whom live near this spot. A little way beyond this there is an ancient polygonal reservoir, which seemed once to have been used for purposes of irrigation; and near this is the ruinous Saracenic Khan, built for the accommodation of caravans between Damascus and Egypt. This is Khan Minyeh, and it has been strongly upheld by Robinson to be the true site of Capernaum, though Captain Wilson, Ritter, and others give the preference to Tell Hum, a few miles farther along the shores of the lake. There are many ruined buildings at the latter place, but they are difficult of access, owing to the thickets of thistles surrounding them. The principal ruin, called the White Synagogue, is built of white limestone, and many fragments of capitals and columns have recently been brought to light.

On the shore, close to Khan Minyeh, is a fountain, shaded by fig trees, called Ain-et-Tin, with a copious supply of

beautiful clear water welling forth from the rocks. This place has a wild and secluded look about it, and here we rested awhile to enjoy the view and inspect the many traces of ruins in all directions. It is plain, from various passages in the Evangelists Mark and John, that Capernaum was in the land of Gennesaret, and as Tell Hum is not in that 'land,' while Khan Minyeh is, the preference must be given to the latter place. We learn from Josephus that there was a celebrated fountain at Capernaum, for the spring bore the name of the town, and there is a very fine one at Khan Minyeh above mentioned. Near this fountain also there are numerous heaps of stones and rubbish, covering a space of several acres, proving that an ancient city once stood there, which may well have been Capernaum. There is farther an isolated, terraced hill, 300 feet high, rising above the level ground at Khan Minyeh; and this, when covered with buildings, of which traces are to be found, must have given an 'exalted' appearance to the town. The whole arguments are found most clearly set forth in Dr. Robert Buchanan's admirably-written work on the Holy Land.

Soon after leaving this we reached Khan Jubb Yusuf, the 'Khan of Joseph's Well,' so called, Porter says, from the tradition that here Joseph was thrown into a well by his brethren. By taking this route we were unable to follow the windings of the lake until we reached the mouth of the Jordan, which, as is well known, enters Tiberias at its northern extremity and flows out at the other end. The river enters by two mouths with a gentle current, previously pass-

ing through a fertile meadow fringed with oleanders which extends for a mile and a half above the lake. From the walls of Khan Yusuf we took our farewell look at the peaceful waters of Galilee and its silent shores, along which Our Blessed Redeemer so often wandered, accompanied by His disciples. On those flower-decked, grassy slopes, some of His most striking parables had been spoken, and those now calm waters once were stilled to as perfect repose, though the instant before they had raged furiously at the command of Him who spake as 'never man spake.'

The Khan is a large modern building, with a spacious court in the centre surrounded with vaulted chambers, the whole very solidly constructed. It is used for sheltering cattle and goats, but is quite deserted generally. From this point the road runs across a very rough tract of partially cultivated country, having the Safed Mountains on one side and the Jordan Valley to the right hand. In some places, however, the ground was literally covered with a beautiful blue flower, which our friend Mr. Sim called *campanula*; and many other species of wild flowers were to be seen. There were also numbers of storks, with long white bodies and wings tipped with black, that appeared very tame, for they did not fly away on our approach. On our right hand we had the broad flat plain through which the Jordan flows, with Luke Huleh, spoken of in Holy Writ as the 'Waters of Merom,' in the centre. The lake is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long by $3\frac{1}{2}$, and is surrounded by an extensive tract of marsh land, covered with cane thickets, beyond which the plain is fertile and

cultivated. This rich plain attracts the Bedawin, who pitch their tents upon it, and some of the Damascus merchants employ labourers to till a portion of the soil. Lake Huleh is mentioned in the Old Testament as Merom, where Joshua smote Jabin, King of Hazor, and the district near it must be an unhealthy and malaria-stricken spot.

Our tents were pitched near the mountain-side, at a place called Ain Mellâhah, near a large fountain springing from a natural reservoir. A lively stream flows from this down to the Jordan through the marshy plain, which is noted for wild swine at this part. During the night we had a thunder-storm, accompanied with heavy rain, and we were disturbed from our slumbers by the head *mukhary* coming to move our beds away from the sides of the tent, as the rain threatened to come in. It looked very doubtful next morning whether we could move on or not; but we made a start, and the day, after all, turned out bright and breezy. Our way now lay alongside the base of the mountains, with the great alluvial plain of the Jordan on our right hand. We kept on for nearly three hours, still having the hills of Kedesh Naphtali on our left hand, on one of whose ridges the towers of Hunin are to be seen. The plain here is ploughed by wild-looking buffaloes, yoked to a rude plough, and driven by miserable Arabs whose wretched tents may be seen in the distance. Our ears were delighted all the morning with the music of the familiar lark, 'at heaven's gate singing,' and the flowers were numerous and pretty, conspicuous amongst them being the lupin, with its purple

blossom. Passed a large encampment of Turkish soldiers from Damascus, whose horses were picketed at intervals on the borders of rich fields of clover and green pasturage.

After crossing several small streams which run into Lake Huleh, we at length came to a feeder of the Jordan, all closed in with luxuriant alder, oak, and other green trees. Very glad we were once more to hear its rushing waters, whose sources are near the base of Hermon, some ten miles farther north. This stream courses through a prettily-wooded ravine, and is partially hidden by the willows, sycamores, and mountain ash trees, which flourish luxuriantly near an old bridge with pointed Saracenic arches, that spans the flood. The bridge is in a semi-ruinous condition and has no parapets, but it forms a picturesque object for a sketcher's pencil. Another hour's ride along a very rough road brought us to the remarkable round mass of basaltic *tufa*, called Tell-el-Kady, from which issues one of the sources of the Jordan. The water rushes out in a broad rapid stream from the base of the hill, forming a dark eddying pool so overgrown with green bushes and underwood that it is not easy to see its full extent.

This is a remarkable spot, which is believed to be the Dan of Scripture, and marks the site of the northern frontier town of the land of Israel. Here Abraham overcame Chedorlaomer, who had plundered the cities of the plain; and here the 600 men from Dan fell upon the colonists from Zidon, who had built a city at this place, and utterly destroyed it. And at this fountain also the impious Jeroboam

set up one of his golden calves for the people to worship, so as to suit the convenience of the northern tribes and keep them from going to Jerusalem. A little way from the Tell are two noble old oak trees, one of them having a venerable trunk of great circumference, and there are many fragments of ruins scattered about. But we now found ourselves in a richly-wooded glade, which all travellers agree in describing as having quite the look of English park scenery. There is abundant green turf, overshadowed by many stately oaks, olives, hawthorns, mulberry and pomegranate trees, poplars, and other kinds, which give a beautifully-clothed and verdant appearance to the spot; and towering over all is the majestic Hermon, its snow-clad summit now hidden by clouds, and its rugged sides clothed with clustering forest trees down to the plain.

Our resting-place for the night is Banias, which stands on a broad terrace surrounded with rushing torrents and venerable olive and oak trees. This is the ancient Cæsarea Philippi, the city adorned by the splendour-loving Herod, and where Peter confessed the Divinity of Our Lord. The modern village is a wretched place, with poor mud hovels, surmounted by arbours made of wood and boughs of trees, in which the inhabitants live during the summer, to escape from scorpions and other noxious reptiles. All round about are seen the ruins of the ancient city that stood between two ravines, through which course the principal source of the Jordan and a smaller mountain stream. A *fosse* encompassed part of the city, and it was surrounded by walls

of solid masonry, with towers and bastions, considerable remains of which are to be seen. The spot where we encamped is a grove of very old olive trees, on the edge of a dashing stream, one of the many which issue from the mountain-sides near Banias.

As it was close to our camping-ground, I made my way to the main source of the Jordan, which gushes out from the base of a ridge of rock between two parallel wadys that run down to the plain. It is a remarkable sight this broad river of deep blue water, emerging in a sort of broken cascade from the *débris* at the foot of the rock. The volume of water soon settles into a deep stream, with a swiftly-flowing current, and circling away amidst lofty willow and poplar trees is soon lost to view. Behind the source the lofty precipice of limestone is seen, with two large artificial caverns cut in the rock, and two small sculptured niches higher up its face. There is a Greek inscription on one of the niches, from which we learn that this spot was consecrated by the priest of the god Pan. Little is known of Banias previous to the reign of Herod the Great, who, according to Josephus, built a beautiful temple 'near the place called Panium.' The historian adds that Herod dedicated this temple to Cæsar Augustus, his patron. In this neighbourhood, it is supposed by most learned travellers and Biblical scholars, must the scene of the Transfiguration of Our Lord be sought for. The tradition which once placed it on Mount Tabor is now completely disproved, and we must look for the scene on one of the peaks of Hermon.

Having inspected the source of the Jordan, we turned our steps to examine the ruins of the city, which are of a highly picturesque character, scattered over a considerable extent of ground. The citadel is the principal ruin, and its massive stone walls, which rise in some parts to a height of 20 feet, are washed by the foaming Jordan. A venerable-looking bridge spans the narrow ravine running down from the mountains, and conducts into the principal tower of the citadel by an ancient gateway built of large bevelled stones. The view from the bank of the ravine near this is striking, and presents quite an Alpine appearance, owing to the noble range of Hermon towering upwards from where we stood, its huge sides seamed with many a rocky chasm.

But the main glory of Banias is that grand ruin, the castle of Subeibeh, undoubtedly one of the first architectural remains in Palestine. We ascended to the peak on which it stands, at an altitude of 1,000 feet above the town, on the following morning. The castle occupies the ridge of a peak which juts out from the mountain-side, and is surrounded on three sides with tremendous precipices. You clamber with some difficulty up the pathway which zigzags the face of one side of the ridge, and gain a small portal in one of the great round towers of the fortress. The ramparts are constructed of large bevelled stones, and are but little injured in many places, while the great extent of the building, which run along the crest of the hill for nearly 1,000 feet, gives it a most imposing appearance. At the eastern end of the ridge is the citadel, a work of immense strength surrounded with

a moat, standing upon scarped rocks, and defended by ramparts and towers. Inside the castle are some large reservoirs of water, which were amply supplied at the time of our visit. The origin of this noble fortress is entirely unknown, but its great antiquity is matter of little doubt. In all probability it may be supposed to be the work of the Phœnicians to defend this mountain pass, as they had a great trade with Damascus by this route, and its architecture is peculiar to this people. There is no mention of it, however, in history earlier than the time of the Crusaders, into whose hands it fell in the year 1130 and continued in Christian possession for about thirty-five years.

From the western end of the castle a fine prospect is gained over the entire plain of the Jordan, almost to its junction with the Sea of Galilee. The green and rich plain of Lake Huleh stretches away at our feet, with the picturesque ruins of Banias in the foreground, the hills of Kedesh Naphtali, and the blue mountains of Galilee in the distance. Then on all sides of the ridge on which we stand are the dark ravines, richly clad with woods, that open out from the mighty mass of Mount Hermon. Five or six handsome Druse girls were curiously observing our motions, and from them, for a pecuniary consideration, we got a refreshing draught of water out of a large jug which one of them ran and filled. They had dark eyes and finely-formed oval faces, with their hair falling down in heavy plaits on either side, and their costume came nearer to one's preconceived idea of oriental attire than any I had yet seen. From

the head a long white robe fell down almost to the heels, partly covering a blue linen undergarment, and they wore the voluminous trousers which are now seen frequently in the mountain villages on our way to Damascus.

Once more scrambling down to where we left our horses, we proceeded on our journey. Our path was now a continuous ascent up the mountain range, which stretches in a southern direction from the central peaks of Hermon. The whole way up we had fine views over the Jordan plain and wooded slopes of Hermon, until we reached a green table-land, in the midst of which is the small lake Er-Ram, once supposed to be a feeder, by a subterraneous channel, of the source of the Jordan. This is a shallow lake, and could afford but a scanty supply of water for so large a fountain. From this we held on a path conducting in a northern direction up to the higher shoulders of Hermon, until we gained a point from which we had an extensive view over a portion of the plain of Damascus, the Haurân, and the great marshy land towards Bashan. But we now found that we had wandered considerably from the right track, owing to our guide losing his way, and we had to make a precipitous descent into a wooded valley. There are a succession of rocky ravines, partially clothed with wood, at this part of the great Anti-Libanus range, and in some of them the white limestone cliffs rise up precipitously from the seldom-traversed mule track. About three o'clock in the afternoon we came to the village of Beit Jenn, situated where two valleys meet, through one of which courses a fine Alpine

stream of blue snow-water that foams and sparkles amidst boulders and fallen rocks. The village is partially concealed by poplars, willows, and other trees which flourish near the stream, along whose cultivated banks we pursued our way. This stream is a principal tributary of the ancient Pharpar, one of the rivers of Damascus.

Our camping-place was Kefr Hauwar, a large village surrounded by gardens and fine walnut trees, inhabited partly by Druses and partly by Moslems. There are some fragments of ruins in this village, which is situated a few hundred yards from the river Awaj, the main tributary of the Pharpar. This stream rises at the base of Hermon, drains some of the wild ravines, and then joins the Jennâny. A good many of the inhabitants of Kefr Hauwar came about our tents, with eggs and other provisions to sell, but I did not specially fancy their appearance. We were off betimes the following morning, elated at the prospect of reaching Damascus, but had a tiresome ride of some hours across a bare desert. Passing a succession of bleak hillocks and scrubby hollows between, we at length, from a rising ground, caught sight of the celebrated plain surrounding the oldest city in the world. Those travellers, however, who traverse this route will be disappointed if they expect the vast verdant plain all at once to burst on their gaze, for, owing to the gradual way it is approached from the defiles of Anti-Libanus, there is no commanding view to be gained.

We stopped for a short time at the small hamlet of Artûz, not far from which is the Roman road from Egypt and

Palestine to Damascus, and near this is the traditional locality of the conversion of St. Paul. A swiftly running stream fertilises the district here, passing on to the great plain, and now we are in the midst of beauty and cultivation. After leaving Artûz we were soon fairly in the plain, surrounded on all sides with rich cornfields, olive-groves and orchards, while in front there spread out a perfect sea of verdure stretching away in distant perspective until the horizon was bounded by a range of mist-covered mountains. Holding along the broad track and feasting our eyes upon the ocean of foliage in front, amidst which the white minarets of the city rose up to view, we now saw in all directions that system of canals and watercourses which completely irrigate the plain. It is no very easy matter to get inside the city, for there are so many lanes outside the walls conducting through interminable gardens and plots of ground full of mulberry, walnut, olive, apricot, apple, pear, plum and fig trees, that you get completely confused, unless an experienced guide is with you. At last, however, we discovered a small and shabby gate, through whose portals we entered the celebrated city which we had come so far to visit.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAMASCUS TO BAALBEC AND BEYROUT.

THE situation of Damascus is unique. A glittering white city rising from a billowy mass of verdure, stretching for miles through the broad plain more than thirty miles long which is bounded on three sides by lofty mountain chains. Beyond the fruit orchards and gardens, whose delicate green foliage forms the chief feature of the landscape, there come extensive meadows and cornfields, fertilised by the 'Abana and Pharpar.' The first of these rivers is now identified with the Barada, which rises in the wild ravines of the Anti-Libanus range. It flows through a deep gorge in the hills clothed abundantly with trees and banks of turf, passes through the city and spreads itself over the thirsty plain. The Awaj, or Pharpar, flows into the plain by that part of it which we had already traversed, and after watering the richly-cultivated country through which it courses, enters one of the three lakes that lie to the east of Damascus.

The origin of the city is lost in remote antiquity. According to Josephus, it was founded by Uz, the great-grandson of Noah. It was a place of some consequence in the time of

Abraham, and at a subsequent period its kings made war against Israel. Damascus long continued to be a great commercial capital, and a century before the Christian era it once more became a royal residence. In the year 64 B.C. the city was occupied by the Romans under Pompey, and a proconsul sometimes resided in it. The apostle Paul visited it about the year 37 A.D., and Christianity made considerable progress there, while about the beginning of the second century the great temple was converted into a Christian church. For three centuries the worship of Christ prevailed, but at length, in 634, Damascus fell under Mohammedan rule, though the Christians were permitted to retain seven churches and to remain undisturbed in their faith. In the year 661 Damascus became the capital of the Mohammedan empire, under the warlike dynasty of the Omeiyades, who spread their conquering arms over vast portions of Europe and Asia. The city was now adorned with sumptuous buildings; amongst them the great mosque was redecorated, which, originally a heathen temple, had subsequently been used as a Christian cathedral.

For six or seven centuries Damascus was comparatively prosperous, though occasional attacks were made upon it by the Crusaders and others, with no definite result. Then, in 1401, Tamerlane burst upon the devoted city with his wild hordes, and a terrible massacre occurred, incited by that cruel warrior in utter violation of his express treaty. There is a tradition that only one Christian family escaped out of a large population, and the greater part of the city was

destroyed by fire. A century after this the Turks, under Sultan Selim, gained possession of Damascus, which they have ever since retained, with the exception of the short period of Ibrahim Pasha's occupation, when, for the first time, it was opened to the representatives of Christian powers. The terrible massacre of Christians which took place in 1860 will not soon be forgotten, and Porter gives some interesting details of it, which had been furnished to him by Mr. Robson, of the Protestant Mission, who was in the city at the time. The latter estimates, from lists carefully made up, that 1,200 persons who permanently resided in Damascus were slain, besides a large number of strangers from Syria, Egypt and other quarters, who had been brought to the city on business or other matters. Many hundreds of refugees from the surrounding Christian villages, who were found crowded together in public places, were ruthlessly murdered. 'Thousands,' says Porter, 'who escaped the sword of the assassin died of fright, of wounds, of famine, or of subsequent privations. Those murdered were men mostly in the prime of life, the only support of wives and children. Their houses were burned, their property was swept away, all means of support were taken from them. . . . The feeling of distrust, fear, and hatred still remains deeply rooted in the hearts of the Christians towards the Mohammedans, and it can never be allayed so long as the treacherous government of Turkey rules over Syria.'

In spite of this dreadful blow to the Christian cause, Damascus is well cared for by the friends of true religion in

England and America. The Protestant Mission was established in 1843, and is still vigorously carried on, though the mission church and schools were burned during the massacre, when one of the devoted missionaries, the Rev. Mr. Graham, of Belfast, fell a victim to the assassins. Through the liberality of Miss Bromfield and other Christian friends, the church and the schools were rebuilt and have been largely attended both by Christians and natives. Both in the city and villages near it scholars are gathered in, and public worship is conducted in Arabic twice every Sunday. There is always a service in English every Sunday, information as to which may be gained at Dimitri's Hotel or the British Consulate. As a rule, it is held in the church of the Irish Presbyterian Mission, at 11 o'clock.

Damascus has a population of 150,000, and is the political capital of Syria. The Pasha, who is commander-in-chief of the army, has three subordinate pashalics under him, namely, Beyrout, Akka, and Jerusalem. Lebanon is an independent pashalic, governed by a Christian, under arrangement made by the European Powers after the massacre. A great trade is carried on by the city with the Bedawin and the peasants, especially in silks, woollen cloths, arms, ornaments, and smaller articles. The bazaars are famous for their extent and variety, and in addition to the silk manufactured goods, great quantities of which are made in Damascus, you can purchase here the products of the looms of Manchester, Lyons, and Cashmere. When the Mecca caravan comes here, the city is thronged with pilgrims from all parts of the Eastern world, whose

varied costumes, as they promenade through the bazaars, present a highly picturesque appearance. With the exception of the great mosque and the castle, which however is a mere shell, and a few ancient doorways, there are no architectural remains to speak of in the city, and its streets are narrow, dirty, and wretchedly kept. Externally almost all the houses have a poor appearance, but many of them have costly and magnificent interiors, which are well worthy a visit.

Our first care was to secure rooms at Dimitri's Hotel, the only one in the city where Europeans can put up, and it is generally quite full at this season. Excellent diligences, the property of a French company who constructed the admirable road from Damascus to Beyrout, ply between the two places and convey numerous travellers, both English and American. As this mode of travelling does not involve the necessity of a dragoman, and as the journey is broken by stopping half-way at Stoorar, from whence you are conveyed to Baalbec, numbers of people are availing themselves of it. Then the ordinary travellers making a tour of the Holy Land generally prefer to go to a hotel when a good one is to be found, so it is quite likely that Dimitri's somewhat limited accommodation may be fully taken up. The hotel is situated near the terminus of the new Beyrout road not very far from the castle, and is a comfortable, well-arranged house. You enter by an unpromising-looking, iron-sheathed door, and find yourself in a cool, open courtyard, shaded by orange and lemon trees, with a clear plashing fountain of

water which freshens the air. A stone platform, raised slightly above the rest of the courtyard, is furnished with chairs and tables, where you can smoke your cigar or chibouque, sip your coffee, read the papers, or otherwise wile away the time.

After resting a short time at the hotel, we set off to inspect the bazaars, which are the great sight of Damascus, always excepting the unequalled view from the summit of the great mosque. You walk but a little way along the crowded streets, and then plunge into the shady, partially-covered labyrinthine alleys which constitute the bazaars. As in most oriental cities, each trade has its special location, where are collected together jewellers, silversmiths, spice-sellers, confectioners, silk merchants, tailors, shoemakers, saddlers, and many others. Their various articles of merchandise are ranged on shelves in an open stall, consisting generally of a wooden counter raised three or four feet above the roadway, and a recess behind it which can be closed by a door. The owner of the shop sits on his counter, smoking a pipe or conversing with his friends, and it surprises one how little real business appears to be done. A restless, incessantly moving crowd passes along the cool, dark bazaar with little noise, for the earthen causeway deadens all sound of human footfalls or tread of animals. It is amusing merely to stand in a corner and watch the gaily-dressed crowds who pass by like characters in a masquerade. Well-to-do merchants, with voluminous turbans and gaudy robes; veiled ladies, dressed in gay silk garments, attended by their dusky

slaves carrying the purchases which have been made; water-carriers clinking their glass as they quickly move along; sometimes a string of camels with their ponderous loads, which brush rudely against the passers-by; sellers of confections pursuing their itinerant calling; perhaps a group of English or foreign travellers, staring about them with might and main; Persians with their tall hats, Circassians and foreigners in their white costume, Arabs from the desert, blue-robed peasants from the villages of the plain, Turkish soldiers, Armenian priests, and Druses from the Lebanon—all come and go in endless procession.

We proceeded to an ancient khan in one of the bazaars, where we made some purchases of silks and tablecloths from a merchant known to our dragoman. There are a good many of these khans which you enter by a doorway from the bazaar, and they are sometimes of great size and most solid construction, occasionally also richly decorated with sculptured marbles. On entering you find yourself in a large gloomy square courtyard, with a range of arched corridors round the sides used as depositories for goods of all sorts. Stone staircases conduct to an upper range of shops, which occupy the covered gallery forming the second story of the building. Our shawl merchant was apparently a trustworthy man, who asked a reasonable price for his goods, and did not follow the usual plan of commencing with an extortionate demand, which he eventually after hard fighting reduced to something like a fourth of his original sum. From this we wandered away through bazaar after bazaar, some

of the principal of which are in the 'street called straight,' now a particularly tortuous passage. The silversmiths' bazaar is one of the most interesting, a large gloomy hall full of narrow counters, with workmen at them, busily engaged at their small fires in forging articles of ornament and use, hammering out silver bracelets and chains, while others are setting and polishing gems, or bargaining with intending purchasers. These men are all Christians, and are a prosperous and respectable body. Numerous cook-shops are scattered about the bazaars, and we were particularly struck with the simple apparatus for roasting the meat, which seems to do its work effectually. A great number of triangular slices of meat are stuck one above another, as thick as they will pack, upon a long skewer which slowly revolves before a hot fire. All of these cooks seem to be well patronised by the public, as are the coffee vendors and confection merchants. The seed, shoemakers', and pipe bazaars are each worthy a visit, also the Greek bazaar, where porcelain, antique armour, embroidered silks, precious stones, inlaid daggers, and singular ornaments of all kinds may be purchased.

However, as it is fatiguing work jostling your way through these peculiar oriental scenes of buying and selling, we were not sorry to return to the hotel and partake of our excellent *table d'hôte* dinner, at which about thirty guests were present. We again passed the castle, whose ancient walls may be seen a good way off amidst the mud-built houses and wooden stalls which environ them. It is of great extent, 280 yards long by 200 broad, and is encompassed by a deep

moat communicating with the Barada. To see the interior an order from the military authorities is necessary, but there seems to be nothing to repay the trouble of a visit. There are extensive corner towers, and the walls, which, whether of Roman or Saracen construction, are extremely old, have the appearance of great strength. Not far from the castle is the wonderful plane tree, 40 feet in circumference, that no one should leave Damascus without seeing; its enormous trunk, however, exhibits signs of decay, but great branches full of vigorous life spring from it. The authorities, with little regard for so venerable a relic, have permitted a house to be built against it, which greatly spoils its picturesque appearance.

After dinner it was very pleasant to lounge about the cool and fragrant courtyard, watching the scenes of oriental life going on. Several vendors of the usual articles and trinkets with which travellers are tempted now appeared, and did a lively business in pipes, daggers, silks, slippers, Damascus inkhorns, inlaid trays, and such-like. The liberal array of Turkish ornaments, spread on the pavement and lighted up by several lamps, made an effective display; while the bearded owners, squatting on their carpets, smoked on with becoming gravity until a purchaser appeared. The weather looked somewhat unpromising that afternoon and evening, but next morning the sun again shone with cloudless splendour. We did a little more bazaar practice for an hour after breakfast, and then joined a large American party who were going to visit the great mosque. As a napoleon is

exacted for admission from each party, however small, and there are usually a few additional expenses, it is as well to join with some of the intending visitors.

To approach the mosque you traverse an intricate range of bazaars, and the gateway, through which you gain admission, enters from one of these crowded avenues. It is not known when the shrine that from time immemorial has occupied this site was first raised; but a great temple stood here, which was converted into a church for the worship of God by the early Christians. A Greek inscription over the doorway was found nearly half a century ago, with an inscription narrating that the church of 'John the Baptist was restored by Arcadius, the son of Theodosius,' who ascended the throne A.D. 395. As before mentioned, the Omeiyades, who became masters of the city in the latter part of the seventh century, turned the church into a Mohammedan mosque, and destroyed all traces of its former Christian character.

An immense portion of ground, 1,100 feet long by 800 feet broad, is occupied by the mosque and its vast square enclosure. Various gates admit to the interior of the court, which is surrounded by cloisters, having an arched screen in front, supported by stone and marble columns. The mosque is a noble structure, no less than 431 feet long by 125 broad, entirely roofed over, presenting a grand vista of three far-reaching aisles, while midway it is crossed by a lofty transept. We walked along the tesselated marble floor, which is almost entirely covered with carpets, admiring as

we went the double ranges of fine Corinthian columns of *rosso antico*, porphyry, and different oriental marbles, whose venerable appearance contrasts with the new decorations of the ceiling. In the lower parts of the walls are seen many figured devices in marble, and above these come remains of the old mosaic decorations which once adorned the interior. The transept is crowned with a fine dome, 50 feet in diameter and 120 feet high, standing below which, and glancing from end to end, you get a good idea of the magnitude of this great building. Near this you gain admission, by a small door, to the inner sanctum, a small, richly decorated chamber, embellished with fanciful arabesques, under which is said to be the cave where the head of St. John the Baptist is preserved in a golden casket.

From this we proceeded to ascend the loftiest of the three minarets which the mosque possesses. This is the 'minaret of Jesus,' Mâdinet Isa, rising to the height of 250 feet from the south-eastern angle of the great paved courtyard. According to Moslem belief, Our Lord, when He comes to judge the world, will rest on this minaret, from whence, entering the mosque, he will summon before him men of every sect. The ascent is rendered comparatively easy by an excellent staircase, which opens out on to one or two galleries at different altitudes. From the uppermost of these a truly grand view meets your eyes. At your feet lies the city, an irregular, yellow mass of houses with many open courtyards, verdant with trees and sparkling with fountains, and an occasional white minaret lifting up its golden crescent to the

dazzling rays of the sun. All round the great city is that soft sea of exquisite verdure, which imperceptibly fades away first into the green cornfields of the plain, and then is lost amidst the yellow sands of the distant desert. The eye is never wearied of gazing upon the lovely green of those clustering scented groves of flowering fruit trees, which so strikingly contrasts with the snow-clad ranges of lofty mountains that bound the horizon in the direction of mighty Hermon.

After lingering long to survey the matchless view, we descended to the courtyard and quitted the mosque by the same gate that we entered it. Our steps were now turned in the direction of one of the gorgeously-decorated houses, which are kindly exhibited by their owners for the gratification of strangers. Entering a small door, we found ourselves in the usual paved court, with a fountain in the centre, and orange, citron, jessamine, and other fragrant plants scenting the air. From this we went into two richly-adorned apartments, whose walls and ceilings blazed with gold marbles and mosaics. Quaint arabesque devices in gilding and paint, handsome mirrors, and heavy damask curtains gave a sumptuous air to the interior. The floor was marble, and a raised divan ran round the room, covered with handsomely embroidered cushions. Another house which we visited belonged to a Jewish proprietor, some of the ladies of whose family we saw at a distance, but they appeared disconcerted at our observation, and soon beat a retreat. More 'shopping' followed these visits, and our store of tablecloths, silks,

otto of roses, and similar oriental mementoes, was still further augmented.

That evening Mr. Sim and I had the pleasure of dining with the British consul and Mrs. Green at their charming house. Mr. Green is well known as a most efficient representative of British interests in Syria, for he has lived long in the East, understands the language thoroughly, and has all the address and resolution necessary in dealing with Turkish officials. Through the kindness of our hosts, we had an opportunity, which few travellers enjoy, of seeing part of the wedding rejoicings, or rather I should say the ante-nuptial festivities, that take place when a marriage is celebrated in a Jewish family. The 'lovely and accomplished' bride, about to be 'led to the hymeneal altar,' was a daughter of a wealthy Jew by name Stambouli. We accompanied Mrs. Green, who rode a handsome white donkey guided by the consular 'Kawass,' to the house where the party were all assembled. We were received at the entrance-door by several picturesquely-dressed attendants, and found ourselves in a great lighted courtyard, where were a number of girls in pretty white costumes, who saluted us by throwing up their arms, giving at the same time a peculiar shrill, chorussing cry, signifying a hearty welcome. Then some members of the family conducted us into a large, brilliantly-lighted room, with a plashing fountain in the centre and divans round the walls, on which were seated a considerable assemblage of friends and relatives. The floor at one end was somewhat raised above the

remainder of the room, and on this platform sat all the married ladies and elders of the party. These matrons were showy-looking Jewesses, with an unmistakeable tendency to *embonpoint*, to put it politely, whose heavy, rather expressionless countenances were now beaming with cordiality and delight. Some of them wore extremely fine jewels, especially a daughter-in-law of the head of the house, whose splendid diamond rings and bracelets were especially noticeable.

The lower portion of the room was occupied by the younger ladies and gentlemen, a band of musicians, the children and others, all gaily attired and bent on enjoyment. The orchestra discoursed oriental music at intervals, and then one performer played the familiar 'Carnival de Venise' on the violin very fairly. Turkish sweetmeats, preserved fruits, liqueurs, and also cigarettes, were handed round in trays, after which dancing commenced. This performance, however, was strictly a *pas seul* after the Eastern fashion, one young lady succeeding another. Each girl came up on the raised platform, politely kissed Mrs. Green and shook hands with the gentlemen in turns, and then went through her portion of the entertainment. The dance was merely a gyratory motion, slow at first and then growing faster by degrees, while the arms were gracefully raised above the head every now and then, after which, with a courtesy to the distinguished strangers, the young lady rejoined her companions. This went on for more than an hour amidst the smiles of the elder spectators and the merry

applause of the juveniles, while the ringing chorus of the girls in the courtyard was heard at every fresh arrival of guests. We at last took our departure, much pleased with the novel entertainment and the cordial hospitality of Jacobi Stambouli. Previous to our leaving, however, we saw a number of the bride's presents, which were varied and handsome; fine articles of jewellery, silk scarves, pretty *bonbonnières*, fans and other ornaments; not the least curious among them was the wig which, according to the Mosaic law, it is proper for women to wear over the front portion of the head that it is customary to shave.

It rained hard almost the entire forenoon of next day, which was Sunday, and certainly Damascus on a wet day is not a cheerful place. It grew quite cold also, and the condition of the streets was something fearful to witness. We attended service at the British Syrian Schools, and found a small assemblage of people, perhaps about thirty, several of whom were native converts. The Rev. Mr. Hart conducted the service, and preached an excellent and eloquent sermon upon the text of those who 'sow in sorrow shall reap in joy.' We afterwards met this gentleman on board the Constantinople steamer on his way to England. We had some difficulty in finding our way back to the hotel, and wandered away towards the suburbs, getting into muddy lanes, bounded on each side by high walls made of great slabs of dried mud, sometimes 6 or 8 feet long. Various small streams, fed from the Barada, course through the orchards and gardens of this part of the city, and it is a

favourite spot for outdoor *cafés*, which are gaily lighted up at night and thronged with loungers. Travellers sometimes pitch their tents in these gardens, and we found one party under canvas, an English clergyman with his wife and a friend who were going a tour in the Haurân. At last we regained our road to the hotel, which we were very glad to reach as it was now raining heavily.

As the weather looked broken, and one of our party was far from well, we resolved to start next day for Baalbec, *en route* to Beyrout. Mr. Sim decided to remain behind, hardly feeling up to the fatigue of crossing the mountains, and intending to proceed quietly by diligence to Beyrout. Undoubtedly we had seen comparatively little of Damascus, especially of its beautiful environs, which afford days and days of charming excursions and rides. There are no less than 134 villages in the suburbs, with a population little short of 50,000, and the views over the city and plain from some of these are surpassingly beautiful. Then some of the fine Roman and Saracenic gateways, the venerable khans, the numerous mosques, the convents and churches, the traditional sacred spots connected with the apostle Paul and the early Christians, the English cemetery, where the historian Buckle fills an untimely grave; the endless bazaars, the hospitals, the gorgeous private houses, and innumerable other sights and places of interest, afford materials for a sojourn of weeks in this city, so often styled the 'Pearl of the East.'

Our horses and attendants were at the hotel door shortly after one o'clock on Monday, April 15, and our courteous host

Dimitri came to wish us a pleasant journey. We took the capital Beyrout road, one that would do credit to any country in Europe, though, by the way, it is about the only one practicable for wheeled carriages throughout all Palestine, and for some time followed the course of the Barada. Passed various large houses embowered amidst fine old trees, used as residences by the higher Turkish officials, and soon got away from the suburbs. The road is perfectly flat for two or three miles, with rows of poplar trees skirting it, and then enters the rugged gorge through which the Barada flows into the plain. All the lower portions of the limestone mountains rising up from the stream are beautifully verdant and clothed with poplar, walnut, fig, and other trees. A luxuriant undergrowth of shrubs and tangled grasses is nourished by the numerous rills and streams of water bursting from the mountain-sides, while substantially-built channels for conveying the water at a higher level than the river's bed are seen carried along the banks of the gorge. Still, though the smooth macadamised road is very pleasant to traverse on horseback, I was infinitely disgusted when I found that by following it we had lost the celebrated view of the plains of Damascus, which is gained by taking the old route over the brow of the mountain.

Leaving the Beyrout road in the middle of this romantic glen, we turned to the right and pursued our way over a dreary, treeless country, with limestone mountains on all sides, and occasional rocky hollows between the bleak ridges of barren pasture lands. But as we got deeper and deeper into

the mountain, and came down upon the village near Ain Fijeh, the scenery grew grand and interesting. The valley is bounded on one side by the mountains 2,000 feet high, and a lofty range of precipices on the other. All along its banks the stream is fringed with beautiful green walnut, fig, poplar, apricot, and other trees, which fill the lower slopes of the valley with a billowy mass of rich verdure. Numerous small villages are seen embowered amid the leafy trees, and the inhabitants came out to inspect us as we passed. The main attraction of Fijeh is its remarkable fountain emerging from the hill-side, similar to that of the Jordan at Banias, but with a considerably larger volume of water. It rushes out in a magnificent foaming torrent from the steep rocky bank, welling up in bubbling masses, and the stream is all at once a broad, rapid, and deep current.

The ruins of an old temple overhang the source, consisting of a platform of large stones, which show that the structure was once of some size. On the right of the fountain another ruin is seen, formed of ancient masonry, the walls being massive and solidly built, and from them you get the best view of the rushing waters eager to escape from their rocky prison.

As it was rather cold and raw, we did not linger long at Ain Fijeh, but pushed on so as to reach the tents before dark. All the way from this the valley continues richly wooded, and is hemmed in with lofty cliffs rising perpendicularly up to the mountain ridges behind. Luxuriant green grass and promising grain crops clothe the banks of the stream, while apple,

pear, plum, walnut, almond, and many other trees, form a continuous series of orchards for miles and miles along the valley. After a while the valley somewhat opens out, and the hills recede from it in gentler slopes; but still the rows of poplars and other trees plainly indicate the course of the stream. Our tents were pitched under the lee of an overarching rock, near Sûk Wady Barada, the ancient Abila, situated in the midst of fine mountain scenery. But few remains of any size are left to testify to the considerable importance which this city once enjoyed. Shortly before the Christian era, Lysanias, son of Ptolemy King of Chalcis, transferred the seat of government to Abila, hence called 'Abila of Lysanias.' Cleopatra caused the king to be murdered, and for a time possessed Chalcis, and subsequently Abila was governed by members of the Herod family. It became an episcopal see, and in A.D. 634 was captured by the Saracens, after which its history ceased to be of importance.

Next morning our route lay for a considerable way along the Wady Barada, which is full of fine scenery of a bold and rocky character. The mountains are of a red colour where the rocky cliffs rise precipitously from the slopes, and occasional tombs are seen pierced in the rocks. The torrent, which was now full from the rain of the last day or two, tore along with great force, and the ground was too heavy for riding fast. By degrees the trees diminished in number, and two hours from Abila they ceased altogether. The mountain peaks grew more lofty, and being covered with snow made

the air feel excessively cold. Though there are numerous villages on the mountain-side, we only met with a few stray shepherds or peasants, who till the poor stony soil that yields but a scanty crop. Most of the higher peaks were enveloped in mist, and the character of the scenery a good deal reminded me of parts of the Highlands of Scotland.

During most of the day we had for fellow travellers four young Americans whom we had met with at Damascus, and again encountered in the steamer leaving Beyrout. They were lively, sensible young fellows, who had come to Europe for a twelvemonth's tour, and meant to see a good deal of Asia also before returning to the land of the 'almighty dollar.' It would be against all old-fashioned British notions of propriety for a party of young Englishmen to be sent abroad without some older companion, or a clerical friend, to accompany them, but the enterprising youth of America are perfectly well able to look after themselves. I was fortunate in meeting with several most agreeable American families on my travels, whose intelligence, courtesy, and friendliness rather contrasts with the polite frigidity of your fashionable travelling Englishman.

We encamped at the small village of Surghâya, situated on a bleak plain, and as the ground all about was muddy and soft, the afternoon also being chill and uninviting, we did not care to wander far. The following morning was again cold, with a cutting wind blowing, but as the day advanced the sun soon exerted a powerful influence on the temperature. The scenery through which we rode was of a grand descrip-

tion, for we were surrounded by lofty mountain ranges whose tops are always covered with snow. Our road followed a devious course, up one hill and down another, but we thus gained extensive views of mountain, stream and valley. Early in the day we caught sight of the great plain of Bukâa, which extends between the ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, a flat, fertile expanse of green waving crops. For a considerable part of our way we had been following the old Roman road between Damascus and Baalbec, crossing the stream at one place by an ancient bridge. This plain is watered by the Litany, the ancient Leontes, which flows in a south-western direction between the two great mountain ranges, until it enters the Mediterranean a short distance north of Tyre.

Still keeping high up the mountain-sides, shortly after mid-day we obtained our first view of the grand peristyle of the principal temple of Baalbec, towering above the surrounding mass of ruins, while the small village in their neighbourhood is nearly hidden by trees and inequalities of the ground. Situated about the watershed of the great plain which stretches for nearly eighty miles between two opposing chains of the Lebanon mountains, Baalbec has a site well chosen for architectural effect. The town was placed on the slope of some low hills, a mile from the main mountain chain, and it was formerly a place of great strength, possessing regular walls and towers. The temples were built half a mile beyond the city, and as the surrounding plain was flat, vast platforms were constructed to form a foundation for the huge edifices

which were to be erected. Thus a smooth surface, elevated in some parts 50 feet above the plain, was obtained on which to rear those noble temples, whose magnificence has since excited the admiration of the world.

To the Phœnicians is generally ascribed the founding of the city of Baalbec, for the style of masonry in parts of the great platform is decidedly characteristic of that nation. The name which the city bore, Heliopolis, the 'City of the Sun,' shows that here was a shrine consecrated to the worship of that luminary, which always had a high position among Asiatic divinities. In Syrian mythology Baal held much the same place as Jupiter did in the Grecian worship, and it was also a name for the Sun. The district of Heliopolis was colonised by the Romans in the time of Julius Cæsar, and from the inscriptions on the front of the great temple, it seems certain that those majestic buildings were erected by the Emperor Antoninus Pius about the middle of the second century. It would appear that the great temple was dedicated to all the gods of Heliopolis, and Macrobius mentions that in it was kept a golden statue of Jupiter, which was carried through the city on festive days. There seems little doubt, however, that previous to this, other temples existed on the site of the present ruins, for Heliopolis, as a city, is known to have flourished long before the Christian era. Under Roman auspices, the temples were the scene of obscene orgies and horrid persecutions, partially checked in the time of Constantine, who founded at Heliopolis a large basilica. Crowds of martyrs were subjected, amidst those grand monuments,

to fearful cruelties, until, in A.D. 379, the Emperor Theodosius converted the great temple of Baal into a Christian church. In the seventh century the Moslems took possession of Heliopolis, which they afterwards called by its original name of Baalbec, and they turned the temples and enclosures into a vast fortress. The city from that period declined, and its population dwindled away to a few hundred inhabitants, some of whom are Christians under the supervision of a bishop of the Greek Church.

You enter the ruins by a long subterranean passage or tunnel, which has its orifice at the south-eastern angle of the outer wall, and after traversing its gloomy vaulted interior, you emerge upon the great court of the temple of Baal. An extraordinary sight meets your eyes, for on all sides your admiration is excited by majestic ruins in every stage of destruction. To your left is seen the portico and part of the peristyle of the temple of the Sun, with its grand entrance 42 feet high by 21 feet wide. It is further adorned with magnificent fluted columns, 65 feet high, surmounting which is a massive and highly ornate entablature. But the object which at once attracts your whole attention is that cyclopean ruin, the peristyle of the great temple, once composed of 54 gigantic columns, 75 feet high and 7 feet in diameter, but now, alas! represented only by six of those stupendous columns, which exalt their noble shafts amidst a wilderness of half-buried capitals, broken pillars and portions of entablature. Then, turning to the right, the immense proportions of the great court in front of the temple impress one with the

vast scale of the entire remains. This court is 440 feet long by 370 broad, and in its side walls are niches for statues and recesses, with many remains of columns, while small chambers are seen at intervals whose interiors are highly ornamented. A portal 50 feet wide opens into the hexagonal-shaped court, whose diameter is 200 feet, forming, with the spacious portico beyond, the eastern and main entrance to the majestic series of buildings. The entire area covered by the temples, courts, and surrounding walls is little short of 1,200 feet in length and 800 in breadth. My description, however, would have been more distinct had I begun with the fine portico facing the east, 180 feet in length and 37 feet deep, access to which was gained by a spacious flight of stairs. Beyond this came the hexagonal court, leading to the grand quadrangular court, at the end of which stood the great temple, with that unequalled peristyle, whose remains constitute one of the finest ruins in the world.

Commencing at the portico, we find that it is founded upon a wall of large, roughly-dressed stones, so as to be elevated above the surrounding ground. Indeed, the whole of these grand structures were built upon a large substructure of enormous walls and massive arches, forming a continuous platform, with a height at the great temple of 50 feet above the plain. The portico was also adorned with columns and side-wings, in the latter of which were chambers of considerable size, and carefully decorated. Passing into the hexagonal court, more small recesses and chambers are observed, but the columns with which they were ornamented

have almost perished. Then comes the great court, whose numerous chambers, niches and recesses, with their graceful pilasters, richly sculptured entablatures, and fanciful friezes, would take days to examine properly. And now the traveller stands transfixed with admiration before the majestic fragment of the noble temple. The columns are Corinthian, and the shafts are composed of three massive pieces of stone, while the base, capital, and the portion of entablature, 14 feet high, immediately above each column, are severally one huge block of stone. The latter especially are highly decorated with rich mouldings of the egg and dice ornaments, and a frieze of acanthus leaves extends its airy tracery along the face of the entablature.

These six columns stand upon a massive base of great stones, much buried by soil and rubbish, at a considerably higher elevation than the infinitely more perfect temple of the Sun, situated at the south-west corner of this gigantic group of ruins. Its ornaments and architecture are Corinthian, similar in character to those of the temple of Baal, and we can form an excellent idea of the appearance it must have presented when in its pristine glory. The portico, facing the east, arrests the attention of all travellers from its singular and highly ornate character. The sides of the portal are each a single stone, with an elaborate and beautiful border of carved work. The under surface of the lintel was sculptured with the figure of an eagle, similar in style to that seen on the temple of the Sun at Palmyra, the bird holding a caduceus in his talons; but, unfortunately, the key-stone

of the lintel was displaced by the shock of an earthquake about the year 1759, and sank two feet from its original position, though it was held up by the stones on either side. Within the last two or three years, however, it no longer was suffered to hang suspended in this perilous position, but a most unpicturesque pier of masonry has been built up to support it. The architrave is also decorated with Cupids, scrollwork of leaves, bunches of grapes, and other emblematical devices.

You enter the temple, which is of great dimensions, 227 feet by 117, and find that the interior also is highly ornamented with columns, pilasters, and sculptured niches. At its western end is the sanctum, which was elevated above the floor of the temple, and separated from the nave by a range of columns. Proceeding outside to examine the noble peristyle, you are still more struck with the majestic character of this fine temple. When entire, the forty-two pillars of the colonnade must have presented a truly imposing appearance. Those that remain on the north side, nine in number, are surmounted by a fine entablature 12 feet high, connected with the main walls of the temple by immense slabs of stone. It is much to be regretted that the elaborate ornamentation of the entablature has been so seriously injured in many places as scarcely to be traceable. The west end of the temple is the most perfect, as there are six columns still standing, though great masses of ruins encumber the basement wall. On the south side one solitary column remains, but, strangely enough, it has been forced from its place by

some tremendous shock, and has rested unbroken against the temple wall for more than 100 years. There was a great earthquake in the year 1759, which wrought much havoc amongst those colossal ruins, no less than nine columns of this temple and three of the great temple being thrown to the ground.

There is an extensive breach in the wall at its south-western angle, by which you can, without much difficulty, descend to the plain and survey the magnificent substructure supporting those ponderous remains. I made my way across the prostrate columns and displaced stones, and crossed a little stream of clear water running at the base of the western wall. Standing midway along this vast mass of masonry, I saw before me the three celebrated stones whose gigantic proportions never fail to astonish all travellers, and from which the temple once had its name, Trilithon the 'Three-stoned.' They form a continuous course of masonry 190 feet in length, each stone being upwards of 63 feet long and 13 deep, and are built into the wall at an elevation of 20 feet from the ground. Truly one might almost excuse the Arab belief that the Genii had been the constructors of this wondrous structure, for by what then known force could this astounding work have been performed? On rounding the corner of the outer wall I was again overpowered with astonishment on inspecting the unfinished northern wall, which has nine stones in it, each more than 30 feet long and 13 high. Everything, however, is on such a colossal scale, that the mind gradually grows accustomed to architectural wonders,

and stones 20 feet long hardly attract any observation. In wandering round the exterior walls you get an excellent idea of the vast size of the mass of temples, and you also see how many different races of men once worshipped here, and what various ideas of strengthening and adorning the buildings were then in vogue.

But undoubtedly the time to see this, as well as most magnificent ruins, is by 'pale moonlight.' That evening I strolled away from our tent, which was pitched in the area of the great quadrangular court, and took up my stand on an old column commanding a prospect of the ruins. All around was silent as the grave, and the huge columns of the great temple rose grandly up against the star-spangled sky, while a confused outline of mouldering capitals, shafts, and portions of crumbling walls, majestic in their destruction, filled up the details of the ghostly picture. The vast columns and entablatures loomed black amidst the heavy atmosphere, partially lit up by the moonlight, and long dark shadows cast athwart the broken area of the temple still further heightened the striking effect. The most intense gloom pervaded each yawning portal and cavernous recess, while the ponderous capitals, lying half-hidden amidst long grass and clustering weeds, seemed to acquire a still more gigantic bulk. There was something solemn and awe-inspiring in thus wandering amidst those marvellous monuments of a forgotten past, and the mind dwelt sadly upon the terrible scenes which once were enacted on this very spot. Assuredly the record is 'on high' of those saintly martyrs who here

yielded up their last breath amidst the exultant shouts of their enemies, and their lustre will shine with exceeding brilliancy on the day when Our Blessed Saviour makes up His jewels.

We spent a little time that afternoon in inspecting the village of Baalbec and one or two ruins near it. It is but a poor place, and the inhabitants do not manifest a particularly friendly disposition towards strangers. The remains of a ruined mosque, entrance to which is gained by a doorway off the narrow street, are worth examining for the sake of the fine granite columns which may be seen inside. Extensive portions also of the old wall which surrounded the city are to be seen, and the fountains are well worthy of a visit. The water which supplies them flows along a pretty valley, green with verdure, and passing partly through the village and beside the temples, breaks up into little streamlets, which lose themselves in the thirsty plain. But the principal ruin outside the great range of temples is a small circular building on the outskirts of the village, surrounded by an ill-kept garden orchard. Its interior is 38 feet in diameter, and there is a peristyle of six columns supporting an entablature, which, as well as the walls and decorations outside, shows many traces of the ravages of time. This temple was formerly covered with a dome, long since destroyed, and during last century it was used as a Greek Christian church, but no efforts are now made to maintain it in order.

In addition to our party, there were two other encampments of tents inside the ruins of Baalbec. The young

Americans had arrived much about the same time as ourselves, and later on in the afternoon an Austrian nobleman and his lady, the Prince and Princess Alfred de Liechtenstein, also pitched their tents near the temple of the Sun. Certainly few spots in the world offer such a splendid prospect of colossal ruins, which can be calmly surveyed as you sit in your tent, and the grass growing inside these great courts is pleasantly soft and green. To our surprise, as we were quietly indulging in the 'fragrant weed' after dinner, who should appear on the scene but our friend Mr. Sim. He found himself better, and pushed on from Damascus by diligence to the half-way house of Stoorar, from whence he had that afternoon ridden on a rather indifferent animal all the way to Baalbec. With characteristic energy he set out, accompanied by a guide, on a partial inspection of the ruins, and completed his survey on the following morning.

Reluctantly did we leave our camping-ground next morning, for in the early sunlight the ruins seemed finer than ever, and we knew we never should 'look on their like again.' Before starting I went to take a farewell look at these vast remains, and standing on the base of one of the columns of that grand peristyle, I gazed long and wistfully at the scene of destruction. From this point you decidedly command the best view of the ruins, for before you are the piled-up masses of broken columns, capitals and cornices, beyond which comes the noble form of the temple of the Sun. Its most perfect sides were presented to view, with the early sun rays gilding each capital and shaft. Beyond this temple the eye

wandered away to the great walls surrounding the courts, and gradually returned to the vast columns at whose base I stood. But time pressed, and we had a long ride to our resting-place for the night, so there was nothing for it but to bid farewell to those unequalled ruins.

We quitted them by the same long, gloomy, arched passage, and turning away to the right, followed the stream of water for some distance, passing by walled enclosures with sycamore and fig trees shading our path. Shortly after this we passed the quarry near the slope of the hills, from whence the enormous stones forming part of the great platform of the temple were hewn. One huge block is seen still attached to the rock on which it rests, but otherwise all ready for removal. It is 68 feet long and 14 feet deep, and has been computed to weigh more than 1,100 tons. From this point, and also at one or two other slight eminences, you get fine views of the ruins of Baalbec, more especially of the grand outline of those six columns which proudly tower over the surrounding mass. We also gained an extensive view of the great plain of Bukâa, with its snow-clad mountain chains on either side.

This plain is a vast expanse of partially-cultivated soil, devoid of trees, fences, or other distinguishing objects, and much of it is free to any wanderers who choose to bring their flocks to pasture on its scanty herbage. In fact but few families or communities do dwell on it, from whom the tax which the peasants pay to the Government is with difficulty wrung. Afraid of the exactions of their hard masters, the wretched

wanderers make but slight efforts to improve the soil, and there are no roads by which their grain could be taken to Beyrout or other towns for sale. The track from Baalbec to the diligence road between Damascus and Beyrout is a fair enough one for horses or camels in dry weather, but in time of rain it must degenerate into a muddy swamp in most places. As we rode on, however, we observed the soil grew richer and was more cultivated, especially near the villages which dot the mountain slopes. Still no trees were to be seen, and a decided necessity for irrigation was observable in the cracked, parched-looking soil.

Reached Muallakah, a prosperous village, situated at the opening of a mountain ravine, through which flows a considerable tributary of the Litany. A good many poplar trees skirt the river's banks, and some orchards are to be seen, while, apparently, the grain crops flourish here. There are some decent-looking shops in the town, and the inhabitants have a decidedly more respectable appearance than any we have yet seen in the Lebanon. They are dressed in excellent articles of attire, some of them having a semi-European look about them, probably acquired by their intercourse, through the French road, with Beyrout. A mile from this, higher up the glen, is Zahleh, the largest town in the Lebanon, containing a Christian population of more than 10,000 persons, being almost the entire number of its inhabitants. The approach to this town is through a picturesque glen, and its environs are covered with vineyards, while the houses themselves are clean-looking, whitewashed, substantial structures.

But the inhabitants of Zahleh have the reputation of lawlessness, and during the massacres of 1860 they sustained much loss and injury from the Druses.

From this point we were now proceeding through the best known and most traversed route of the Lebanon district. This country, with the valleys on both sides of the great Lebanon chain of mountains, and more especially the mountainous district around Beyrout, is the principal dwelling-place of those two powerful sects, the Druses and the Maronites. The Druses are a remarkable body in many respects, industrious in peace, fierce and implacable in war, but full of energy, and strongly attached to their mountain fastnesses. They profess a religion which they jealously guard from investigation by strangers, compounded of Judaism, Unitarianism, and Mohammedanism. Their religious rites date from the eleventh century, and have their origin in an Egyptian, the Khâlif Hâkim of the Fatimite dynasty. One of his followers, a Persian named Ed-Derazy, who had settled in Egypt, was driven out of that country, and carried his half-crazy doctrines to Syria, where he found ready proselytes. Other disciples continued the work of propagation, and a Persian called Hamza is considered by the Druses to be the virtual founder of their faith. They believe in the unity of God, and that He appears to certain privileged men, who act as his ministers, and that when this system of belief has become triumphant in the world, then Hâkim shall be owned as sovereign of the universe. The doctrine of transmigration of souls has also been adopted by them, but the rigid system of

secrecy adopted makes it difficult to gain reliable information on these points. They are divided into two classes of ecclesiastics or Okkals, and Juhhâls or seculars. The former live very strictly and abstemiously, and wear a distinguishing white dress. They are the advisers of the nation in critical times, and have periodical councils, when delegates from each district discuss matters affecting the whole tribe. This powerful tribe of mountaineers chiefly reside in the southern ranges of Lebanon, around Hermon and some villages of the plain, and their entire numbers are little short of 80,000 souls.

The Maronites are so called from Maron, a monk renowned for his sanctity, who flourished in the sixth century; whose followers, being condemned for heresy at the great council of Constantinople in the year 681, fled for refuge to the strongholds of the Lebanon, north of Beyrout. In 1180 they acknowledged the supremacy of the Church of Rome, though they retained their own patriarch, and mass is celebrated in the Syriac language. The Sacrament is administered in both elements, and the candidates for holy orders are permitted to marry before ordination. The patriarch resides usually at the convent of Kanobin, not far from the world-famed cedars of Lebanon, and he is elected by the bishops, subject to the Pope's approval. Porter states that there are eighty-two convents in the Lebanon belonging to the Maronites, containing about 2,000 monks and nuns, and enjoying an annual revenue of 70,000*l.* sterling. Their entire community is estimated at 220,000 souls, but they are ignorant and troublesome, and the clergy fanatical and badly instructed.

'The Maronites,' further says Porter, 'are brave, independent, and industrious; and their native mountains, though steep and rugged, are the garden of Syria. But they are illiterate and superstitious, and their clergy exercise an almost unlimited sway over them both in politics and religion.' Since the time that he wrote this, the numbers above mentioned, especially of the clergy and convents, have largely increased, and the hereditary enmity between them and the Druses, cunningly fomented by the Turkish Government, is as deep as ever.

We joined the Beyrout road at Stoorar, the half-way station for the diligence company, where they have a number of sheds for the accommodation of their horses. There is also a rather poor-looking hotel, where travellers stop while arrangements are being made by the landlord to forward them to Baalbec. He has a small house also at the latter place, where tourists can pass the night, provided each one does not mind sharing a room with three or four others, as the establishment is of a limited description. We passed the village of Kubb Elias, surrounded by its green orchards, and a little distance off is seen an old castle, said to have once been the stronghold of a Druse prince. As we wound up the long zigzag road, which climbs by a gradual ascent the steep sides of this chain of the Lebanon, I could not help reflecting with sorrow that we had passed our last night under the canvas tent which had so long sheltered us, and that our wanderings in the East were so rapidly drawing to a close. Very soon would we exchange the freedom of the tent life and the exhilarating

freshness of the mountain breezes for the crowded city and stifling railway carriage. No longer would we need the careful guidance of our faithful Achmet, who, on his part, fully reciprocated our kindly feelings, and whose remarkable unselfishness and liberality we amply acknowledged in the testimonial which we gave him.

The road, along whose smooth surface we slowly toiled under a burning sun, is admirably macadamised and kept in excellent repair, with the bridges, parapet walls, mile-stones and station houses all in good condition. Shortly after 9 A.M. we reached the summit of the range, and a grand view presently broke upon our gaze. For three hours previously we had been surveying the long plain of Bukâa, with its green tracts of cultivated land and streamlets fringed with poplars fertilising the rich soil, while the vast snow-clad outline of Hermon formed a noble background to the picture. Now a totally different prospect lay before us. Thousands of feet below us, where the brilliant green groves which skirt the shore near Beyrout suddenly cease, the broad blue Mediterranean is seen stretching far away to the western horizon. It is one deep, waveless, azure expanse, flecked with many a white sail, and light fleecy clouds cast a momentary shadow on the serene surface of that tideless sea. A long white sinuous strip of sand fringes the rich green plains which border the sea for some leagues south of Beyrout, and to the north of the city the dark promontory near the Dog River sends its rocky mass across the sparkling strand. The city itself, nestling under the vividly green slopes of the

Lebanon, and thence spreading on to the beach, is a beautiful object, with its numerous white villas, mosques and minarets, public buildings and convents, all surrounded and embowered amidst mulberry groves, vineyards, cypresses, and palm trees. Then at our feet is a deep broad valley, darkly clothed in many parts with pine forests, while an occasional white village is seen to peep forth amidst the foliage far down in the depths of the glen. And in our immediate vicinity were the noble peaks of the Lebanon, many of them seamed with shaggy, bleak, and precipitous gorges, along whose cavernous depths the winter torrents sweep in their resistless career.

From this point the descent upon Beyrout is long and devious, but the scenery grew richer as we proceeded, and now many groups of people from the city and villages around added life and picturesqueness of costume to the scene. Beyrout is a prosperous city, the principal commercial place and seaport in Syria, with a population of over 60,000, one-third of whom are Mohammedans. It has an extensive commerce with Europe and the Levant, but its imported goods are chiefly for Damascus, the new road having given a great impetus to this trade. Its harbour greatly needs enlargement and improvement, but the bay affords excellent anchorage for large steamers, some of which are generally to be seen riding at anchor, waiting to convey passengers to various ports in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. Several of the principal steamboat companies plying from this to Constantinople, Athens, Trieste, Marseilles, Malta, Alexandria, and other cities, have agencies here; and there are regular packets

also for London, Liverpool, the Clyde, and sundry European ports. There are also banks, European mercantile houses, and consulates of all the chief powers, and Beyrout may be considered the principal commercial *entrepôt* in Syria.

This prosperous seaport was well known in the annals of ancient history as Berytus, and is supposed to have been founded by the Phœnicians. It is first mentioned in history in the year 140 B.C., when it was destroyed by a usurper, called Tryphon. On being taken by the Romans, it was colonised by soldiers from two of their famous legions, and afterwards Herod the Great ruled there for a season, while Titus reposed here after the destruction of Jerusalem. Agrippa adorned the city with some fine buildings, theatres, baths, and a circus in which gladiatorial exhibitions were held. It became also a seat of learning, and its students of law and philosophy numbered some names eminent for their erudition. Unfortunately, in the year 551, the city was destroyed by an earthquake, and its inhabitants dispersed to Sidon and elsewhere for a time. Then came the Mohammedans, who wrought havoc amidst its buildings and institutions, until, in 1110, the city was captured by the Crusaders under Baldwin, and became the seat of a bishopric. The Christians held Beyrout, with the exception of a brief occupation by Saladin, till their power was overthrown in 1291. For a long period Beyrout was of little importance, but about the beginning of the seventeenth century a famous Druse prince rebuilt the city and made it the seat of his government. In 1840 the city was bombarded by an English fleet,

for the purpose of driving out the troops of Ibrahim Pasha, when the walls and a few houses were destroyed, but no very material damage done.

Silk is the great article of export from Beyrout, and it derives its beautifully green environs from the quantities of mulberry trees which in all directions clothe the declivities and heights surrounding the city. Besides these, many olives, vines, cypresses, and even palms are seen amidst the various trees, which impart much richness to the landscape, and the lofty mountains, that slope up like a vast amphitheatre, have many picturesquely-wooded glens and dark pine forests to reward the lover of Alpine scenery. Many beautiful rides can be enjoyed in the vicinity of Beyrout, and scenery of a magnificent description invites the footsteps of the pedestrian or the student of natural history. There are also numerous antiquities within a day's easy excursion; and, should the traveller wish to make a very interesting tour (though this involves at least a week's time), he might ride to the Cedars through some noble mountain passes.

There are several admirable educational, charitable and religious institutions in Beyrout, the principal of which are of American foundation. The Syrian Protestant College is under the supervision of certain American philanthropists, who have entire charge of its funds; but the whole local arrangements are directed by a board of managers, consisting of American and British missionaries resident in the East. It is conducted upon evangelical Protestant principles, but is open to young men of all Eastern sects, who must, of

course, conform to the regulations of the college. Modern languages, literature of Arabia, natural and moral sciences, mathematics, Biblical literature, medicine, jurisprudence, and other branches of learning are all taught, and the number of students who avail themselves of this admirable institution is little short of 100. Although no formal efforts at proselytism are attempted, the various instructors endeavour, when occasion offers, to inculcate the truths of Christianity, and the Bible is in constant use for instruction in history and morality. Boarders must attend morning and evening worship and Bible classes for instruction in the Scriptures. Special attention is given to the medical department, which has attracted much notice, and is presided over by earnest and able men.

The British Syrian Schools were founded in 1860, mainly through the energy and devotion shown by Mrs. Thomson, whose noble labours are well known. She roused much sympathy in England, and through the efforts of zealous Christian teachers, the institution was the means of doing incalculable good by its normal and day schools, infant and elementary schools, and other means of instruction. The lamented and untimely death of Mrs. Thomson was a great blow to the work, but it has since been carried on by those who were inspired by her illustrious example. Besides these, there are the schools established in connection with the Church of Scotland, where last year 170 boys and 60 girls of all denominations assembled to receive excellent instruction from competent teachers. Religious instruction

is also conscientiously given under the supervision of the Rev. Mr. Robertson, of the Church of Scotland, whose sincere courtesy, accomplishments, and indefatigable resolution are well known. There are three teachers who speak English, and are well qualified to keep order and impart instruction, and their salary is augmented by certain fees which the scholars pay. A visit to these and other charitable institutions of Beyrout will be found both instructive and interesting.

We rode to the New Oriental Hotel, which is built close to the seashore, and commands fine views over the bay and the noble mountain ranges surrounding Beyrout. There are some pleasant, airy balconies, where, sheltered from the sun's overpowering rays, you can enjoy the fresh breezes coming from the mountains, the loftiest of which, Jebel Sunnin, is capped with snow. Found sundry friends in the hotel, among them one from Scotland whom I had last seen at Thebes; indeed, it was with considerable difficulty that we got accommodation, as the hotel was so full. There are special days on which there is a rush of passengers for the Constantinople and Marseilles steamers, and it is no easy matter sometimes to secure a berth in the vessel, unless you write some days before for places. The dinner table that evening was quite full, and we recognised several faces which we had observed at Damascus and other stations of our tour through the Holy Land.

I started early on the following day for an expedition to the famous 'Dog River,' Nahr-el-Kelb, accompanied by the

Rev. Mr. Robertson and the Rev. Dr. Nelson, of Greenock. From Mr. Robertson's seven years' residence in Beyrout, he is familiar with all the rides and places of interest in its vicinity, and he is most kind in aiding those of his fellow-countrymen, or indeed visitors of any nationality, who may make his acquaintance. We rode through the tortuous, dusty streets of the town, and then along the smooth sea-shore, passing numerous small gardens of mulberry and vine trees. Crossed over the Beyrout river by a bridge of seven arches, and from it a good view is obtained of the green and fertile environs of this part of the city. The stream is tolerably full at this season, but in summer it dwindles into a mere rill of water, and its banks are prettily wooded in most places. From this point we continued for several miles along the soft sandy beach, until we came to some rocks, which obliged us to make a slight *détour*. About two hours and a half after leaving Beyrout we reached the entrance to the Dog River, through which we waded, and put up our horses at a rustic *café*, pleasantly situated on the banks of the stream.

The river is a rushing stream of clear water, some 30 or 40 yards broad, which issues from a deep gorge in the mountains of Lebanon. Its banks are rocky and precipitous, but wherever a foothold could be gained there are mulberry trees growing, whose delicate green colouring adds a most pleasing feature to the scenery. An old bridge of three arches, the centre one having a considerable span, crosses the river a little way above its mouth, and standing on it

you get the best view of the tranquil and picturesque scene. Proceeding along the left-hand bank of the river, as you ascend, an ancient aqueduct will be observed, partly cut out of the rock and partly supported on arches that are thickly overgrown with long pendent streamers of ferns, creepers and mosses, down which the water trickles with a pretty effect. We did not attempt to follow the course of the river farther, but returned to the place where we left the horses, and greatly enjoyed our *al fresco* lunch with the rushing stream making music in our ears. After an interval of rest, during which we indulged in some of the cigarettes which our kind guide made up with the peculiar skill and rapidity only acquired by a long residence in the very home of the soothing weed, we started to visit the sculptured tablets on the rocks which have excited so much learned controversy.

Those inscriptions are hewn in the rocky banks of the river, where an ancient road runs along the base of the cliffs, in some parts paved with large stones, and at other places hollowed out of the solid rock. At the highest part of the road, where it crosses a ledge of rock overhanging the sea, is a rough structure of masonry, with an old column lying beside it, on which may be noticed a Latin inscription. Between this point and the bridge the principal inscriptions are to be found, and they are contained in tablets cut in the face of the cliff to a depth of 2 or 3 inches, so as to leave a rude frame or scroll round each. There are nine tablets altogether, six of which are considered to be of

Assyrian and three of Egyptian origin, and they are of various sizes. Human figures and hieroglyphics are seen in nearly all of them, some of the sculptured representations being almost of life size, and the head-dress, peculiar shaped beards, and symbolical figures which may be observed, leave little doubt of the authenticity of those strange remains. The well-known oval of Rameses the Great has been discovered on one of the Egyptian tablets, and in another the monarch is presenting an offering to the Sun god, Re. Lepsius says that the three Egyptian tablets have the oval of Rameses the Great. We read in Herodotus that Rameses, or Sesostris, as he was called, in his expedition to Asia Minor actually left behind him certain figures as monuments of his exploits. Layard considers the Assyrian tablets to be the work of Sennacherib, whose army was destroyed with so mysterious and terrible an overthrow. Dr. Robinson, however, does not accept this view of the matter, as he thinks it unlikely that one monarch would cut six distinct tablets in so comparatively unimportant a spot during a single expedition. Porter, whose information, as usual, is ample and clearly set forth, takes a similar view to that of Robinson, and strongly recommends all scholars and travellers to endeavour to throw light upon these strange inscriptions. There is a Latin inscription, not far from these tablets, stating that the road was made in the reign of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, whose title, Germanicus, is specially introduced here. During the occupation of the country by the French army in 1860, advantage was taken of a vacant part on one of these tablets to cut

an inscription commemorating their stay in the neighbourhood.

On returning to the hotel, I took a stroll through the city, paid a visit to the English bankers, Messrs. Heald & Co., and arranged matters for starting on Monday in the Constantinople steamer. Made a few purchases of jewellery and the pretty oriental trinkets which please friends at home, and enjoyed the luxury of a bathe in a tumble-down, rickety, wooden bathing station, from which you can get out to the waters of the bay. The bazaars of Beyrout are by no means specially tempting so far as I saw; indeed, the chief business appears to be transacted in semi-European shops. All the streets near the shore are thronged with a motley crowd of natives of different European and Asiatic countries, and the quays have the usual look of a busy seaport frequented by the listless crowds of idlers who congregate in such places. One agreeable feature that I noticed in Beyrout was the stands a the corners of some of the streets, where delicious cooling drinks are sold at a moderate rate to passers-by. A large lump of half-frozen snow is fixed on an upright stick near the circular basin of water, and when you have selected a glass of one of the various beverages, such as lemonade sherbet, raspberry, or cherry syrups, &c., two or three slices o the snow are mixed with the liquid, giving it a delightfully cool flavour.

Next day, Sunday, April 21, was very warm and sunny, the view from the shady balcony of the hotel being especially clear and beautiful. This was our last entire day in Syria, as on

the following afternoon we set sail for Constantinople. We had parted the previous evening with our *mukharis*, and gave them the usual *douceur* expected on such occasions. Our preparations for returning to civilisation were nearly complete, and the multifarious purchases duly stowed away in the recesses of our portmanteaus. Attended service in the church of the American Mission, where a congregation of about 100 had the privilege of listening to an admirable discourse by the Rev. Dr. Nelson. There is an organ in the church and a tolerably efficient choir, and a good many native Christians form part of the congregation. The Rev. Mr. Robertson officiates there as a rule, and the best spirit is evinced by the various Protestant denominations in their intercourse with one another. It was too hot to walk about much that day, so I found the cool verandahs of the hotel more to my taste, and with a book for a companion spent a long time there, enjoying the balmy breezes wafted across mulberry groves and vineyards from the snowy Lebanon.

Early on the following day the hotel was in a great bustle, for nearly the whole of its inmates were departing by the steamer. Signor Basouli, the smiling and courteous landlord, had enough to do in the way of establishing order among the travellers, dragomans, *mukharis*, guides, and others who invariably throng the lobbies of an Eastern hotel on such occasions. As usual, we had to go to our steamer, the 'Venus,' one of the Austrian Lloyd's handsome vessels, in a small boat—always an uncomfortable proceeding, and somewhat

trying to the temper. On board there was of course the usual bustle and confusion, the shouting of boatmen wrangling about payment, the cries of the sailors hoisting luggage into the hold, the vociferations of ship's officers, the Babel of tongues among passengers of various nationalities, the blowing of steam, rattling of chain cables, the ringing of bells, warning those returning to shore to be off—all the turmoil which is so familiar to your seasoned cosmopolitan traveller. In the midst of this tumult we took leave of our excellent dragoman with sincere expressions of regret at parting with him, and warm wishes for his future success in his career; and for a tour such as ours, I should have no hesitation in commending any friends to the care of Achmet El Fichawi. That evening, when the silver moonbeams were shedding their calm lustre upon the waters of beautiful Beyrout, we were many miles away, enjoying the indescribably balmy atmosphere of a tranquil oriental night.

And now it only remains for me to sum up in a few closing words this imperfect record of my tour in the East. To my travelling companions I have to offer earnest thanks for the kindliness, *bonhommie*, and thorough reliability which marked their conduct, and I trust that the friendship so auspiciously begun may long continue. In a tour such as we took, it is a very trite observation to make, that matters by no means invariably go on smoothly; indeed, it is popularly considered a most severe test of friendship to undertake such an expedition, even with your most intimate associates. As for the tour itself, it is one that I can recommend in the strongest

terms, more especially that portion which embraces the peninsula of Sinai. The grand scenery and sublime associations of those wonderful granite peaks made an indelible effect upon me, and I feel very grateful to God that we were enabled to make the entire journey in perfect safety, and without the smallest injury to our health. Many people will be disappointed at the impressions which a tour in the Holy Land leaves on them, for in the most sacred sites the idolatrous superstition of a scheming priesthood has done its utmost to drive away from the minds of all thoughtful men those ardent feelings of faith which they fondly trusted would have been confirmed and intensified. Still it was our inestimable privilege to tread on the vine-clad slopes of Judæa and the silver strand of Galilee, in the very footsteps of Our Blessed Saviour, and to stand on the summit of that tremendous granite mountain where Jehovah Himself condescended to talk with sinful man.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

00060373

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018